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THE NEW YORKER

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Drive farther. Save fuel. Help environment.
Check, check and check.

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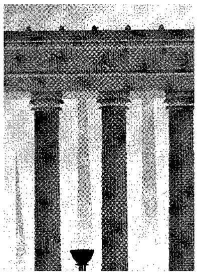
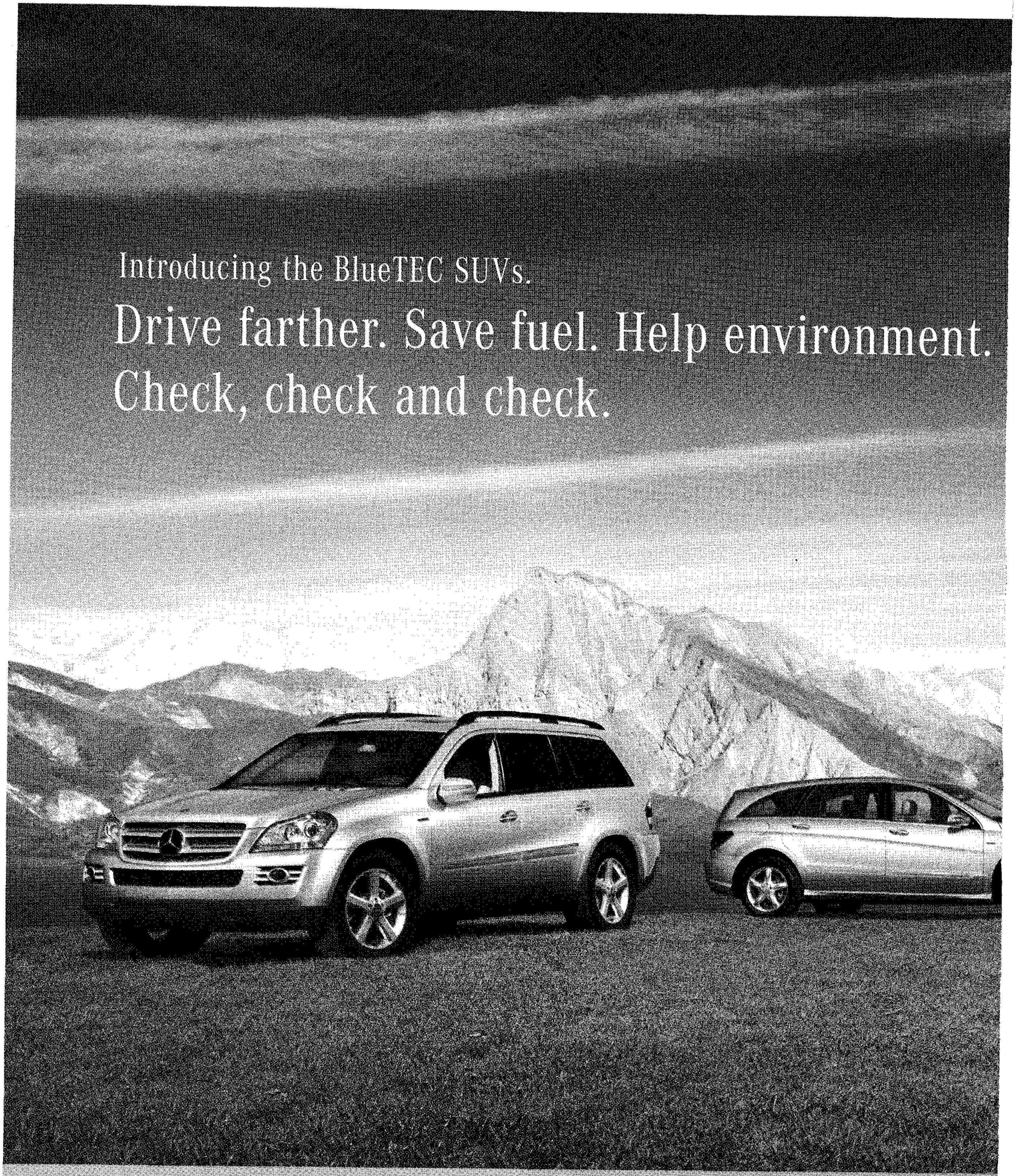
Models shown 2009 GL 320 BlueTEC, 2009 R 320 BlueTEC and 2009 ML 320 BlueTEC. 2009 GL 320 BlueTEC and 2009 R 320 BlueTEC above shown in optional Iridium Silver metallic paint. 2009 ML 320 BlueTEC above

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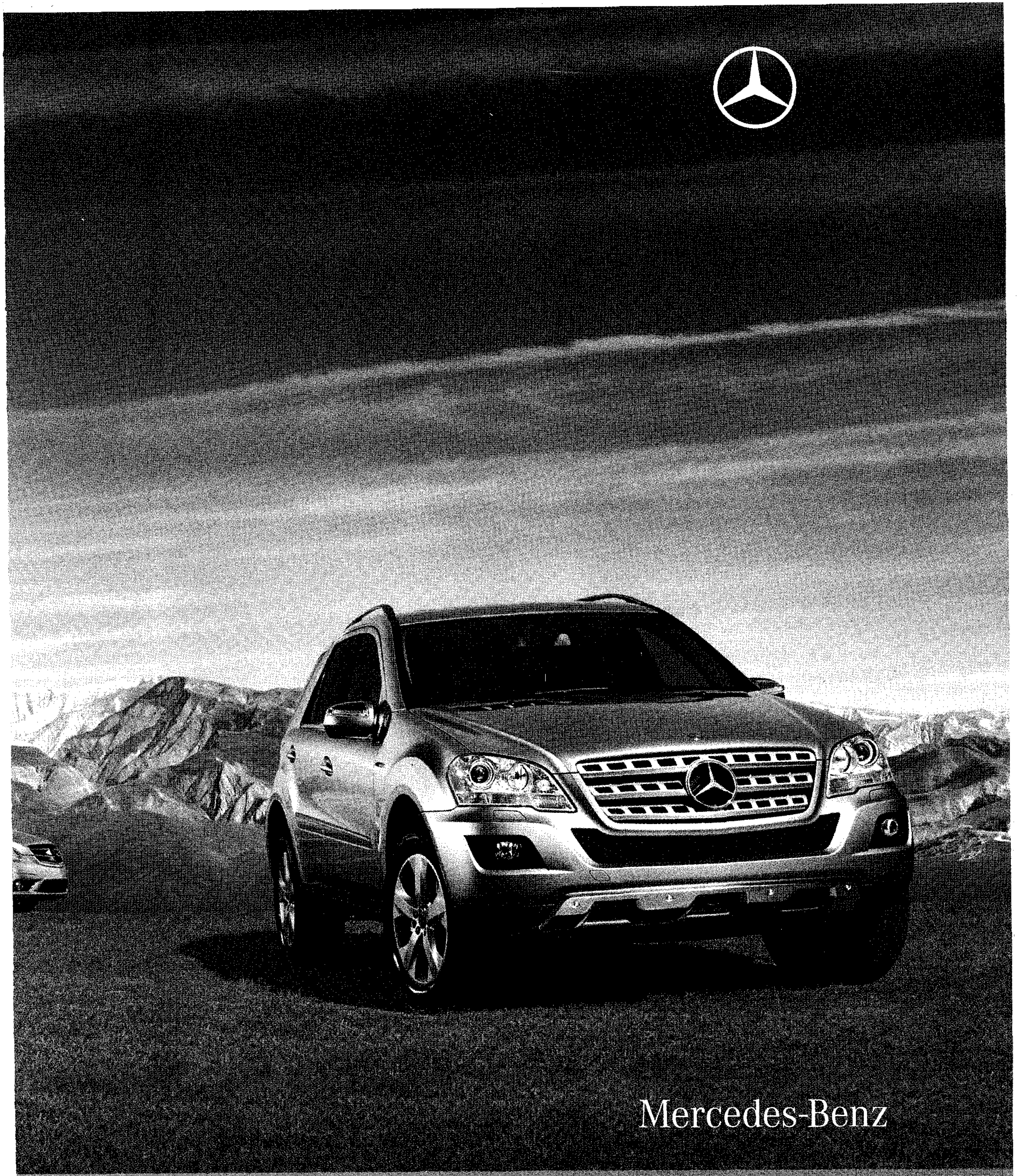

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Does the free market corrode moral character?

Certainly. Or does it?

It is clear that the ferocious competition of interests and passions, the mad rule of money, and materialism as the measure of all things — in short, the free market, released from all rules and governed only by the greed of the most powerful — fatally corrodes our souls. This is what the great Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn thought at the end of his life.

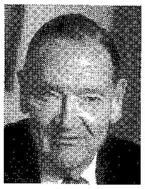
This view was shared by the family of French thinkers of the 1930s called the "non-conformists," which included Charles Péguy and a few others. They saw commodity exchange as a source of depersonalization…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Bernard-Henri Lévy, the French philosopher, has written more than thirty books, including the New York Times *bestseller* American Vertigo *(2006) and, most recently,* Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism *(2008), both published by Random House.*

It all depends.

The answer depends completely on what kind of market we are talking about and what we mean by "moral character." Today's supposedly "free market" could be described more accurately as a "fettered" market. Our financial and corporate regimes fall well short of the classic assumptions of perfect structure, perfect competition, and perfect information.



In the first edition of *Economics: An Introductory Analysis*, a textbook that I read during my sophomore year at Princeton in 1948, the Nobel laureate Paul Samuelson aptly summed up the issue: "the problem with perfect competition is what George Bernard Shaw once said of Christianity: 'the only trouble with it is that it's never been tried'"…

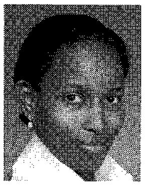
CONTINUED ONLINE.

John C. Bogle is founder and former CEO of Vanguard and president of the Bogle Financial Markets Research Center. His many books include The Little Book of Common Sense Investing *and* Enough: True Measures of Money, Business, and Life, *which will be published this fall.*

Not at all.

There is little consensus on what is moral, let alone on what corrodes morality. A man of faith measures moral character by one's ability to abide by the demands of his God. A socialist might measure moral strength by one's dedication to the redistribution of wealth. A liberal — by which I mean a classical, Adam Smith or Milton Friedman liberal, not a liberal in its American meaning of "pro-big government" — might be religious, and he might see the merits of income equality, but he will always put freedom first. This is the moral framework to which I subscribe.

According to this school of thought, freedom of the individual is the highest aim, and the ultimate test of a person's character is his ability to pursue his own chosen goals in life without infringing upon the freedom of others to pursue their own goals. From this perspective, free economic activity among individuals, corporations, and nations boosts such desirable qualities as trust, honesty, and hard work. Producers are compelled to continually improve their goods and services. The free market establishes a meritocracy and creates opportunities for better jobs for those students who work hard at school.



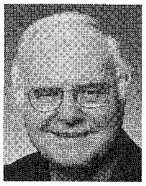
The same mechanism pushes parents to invest more time and money in the education of their children…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Born in Somalia, Ayaan Hirsi Ali emigrated in 1992 to the Netherlands, where she served as a member of parliament from 2003 to 2006. She is the author of the bestseller Infidel *and a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

No! And well yes.

At America's birth, most societies were organized on the foundation of either a landholding aristocracy or a strong military establishment. The American founders rejected these models and argued strenuously that a new society, built upon free commerce, would both engender a higher set of virtues and prove safer for, and more committed to, the rule of law. Such a society would be dedicated not to the pursuit of power but to the creation of plenty. As Alexander Hamilton noted in *Federalist* #12: "The prosperity of commerce is now perceived and acknowledged by all enlightened statesmen to be the most useful as well as the most productive source of national wealth, and has accordingly become a primary object of their political cares." Commerce would distract men from previous sources of division and faction. Their passions would turn from political causes to market activity, and the spirit of cooperation necessary for free markets



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would gradually attach their loyalties to the larger republic.

A commercial society also would be far, far better for the poor, and it would have a beneficent effect on public and personal morality...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Michael Novak is the George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy, and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute. His more than twenty-five books include The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism *and, most recently,* No One Sees God.

Of course it does.

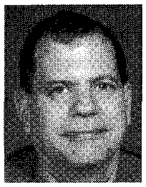
Competition in the market puts people under great pressure to break the ordinary rules of decent conduct and then to produce good reasons for doing so. It is these rationalizations—the endless self-deception necessary to meet the bottom line and still feel okay about it—that corrode moral character. But this isn't in itself an argument against the free market. Think about the ways that democratic politics also corrodes moral character. Competition for political power puts people under great pressure—to shout lies at public meetings, to make promises they can't keep, to take money from shady characters, to compromise principles that shouldn't be compromised. All this has to be defended somehow, and moral character doesn't survive the defense—at least, it doesn't survive intact. But these obvious flaws don't constitute an argument against democracy.

To be sure, economic and political competition also produce cooperative projects of many different sorts—partnerships, companies, parties, unions. Within these projects, empathy, mutual respect, friendship, and solidarity are developed and reinforced. People learn the give-and-take of collective deliberation. They stake out positions, take risks, and forge alliances. All these processes build character...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Michael Walzer is professor emeritus in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He is a contributing editor of the New Republic, *co-editor of* Dissent, *and the author, most recently, of* Thinking Politically.

No, on balance.



In matters of morality, the free market functions like an amplifier. By placing more wealth and resources at our disposal, it tends to boost and accentuate whatever character tendencies we already possess. The net result is usually favorable. Most people want a good life for themselves and for their families and friends, and such desires form a part of positive moral character...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Tyler Cowen is Holbert C. Harris Professor of Economics and director of the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. His latest book is Discover Your Inner Economist, *and he blogs at www.marginalrevolution.com.*

We'd rather not know.

Most of us are consumers who try to get the best possible deals in the market. Most of us are also moral beings who try to do the right things in our communities and societies. Unfortunately, our market desires often conflict with our moral commitments. So how do we cope with this conflict? All too often, we avoid it. We would rather the decisions we make as consumers not reflect upon our moral characters. That way we don't have to make uncomfortable choices between the products and services we want and the ideals to which we aspire...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Robert B. Reich is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has published twelve books on public policy and has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton.

To the contrary.

I can attest from personal experience that, if you try to talk about the free market on today's university campuses, you will be buried in an avalanche of criticism of globalization. The opposition of faculty and students to the expansion of international markets stems largely from a sense of altruism. It proceeds from their concern about social and moral issues. Simply put, they believe that globalization lacks a human face. I take an opposite view. Globalization, I would argue, leads not only to the creation and spread of wealth but to ethical outcomes and to better moral character among its participants.

Many critics believe that globalization sets back social and ethical agendas, such as the reduction of child labor and poverty in poor countries and the promotion of gender equality and environmental protection everywhere...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Jagdish Bhagwati is University Professor of economics and law at Columbia University, senior fellow for international economics at the Council on Foreign Relations, and the author of In Defense of Globalization. *He writes widely on public policy and international trade.*

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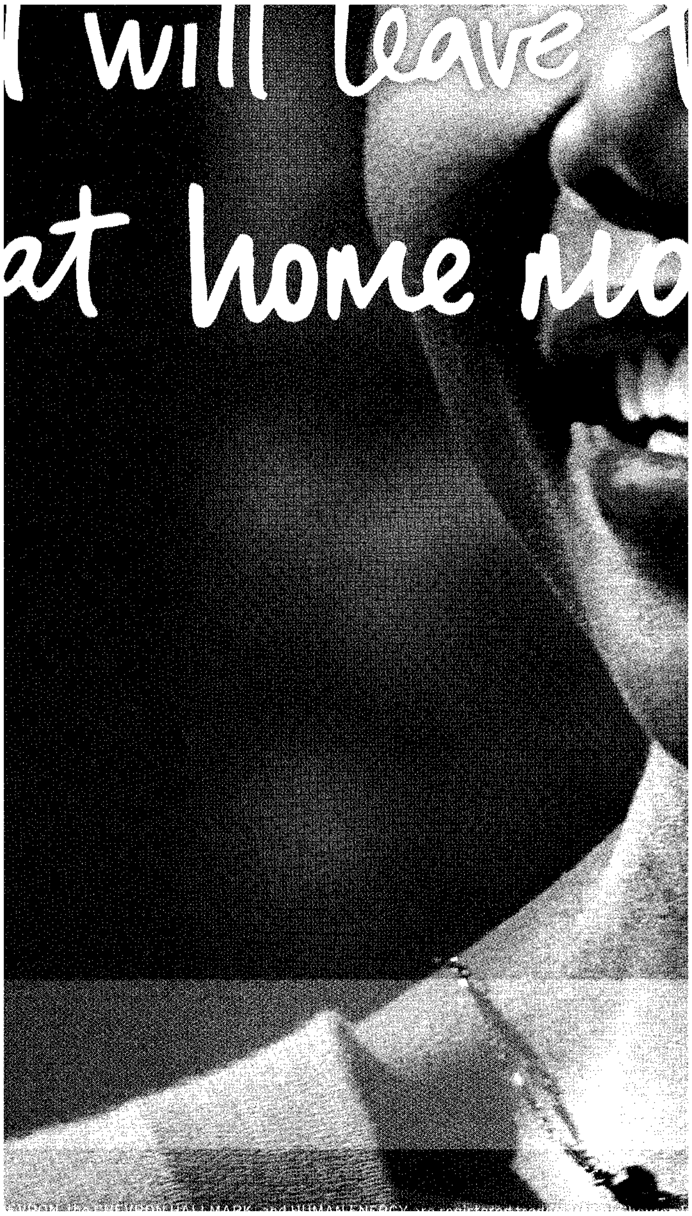
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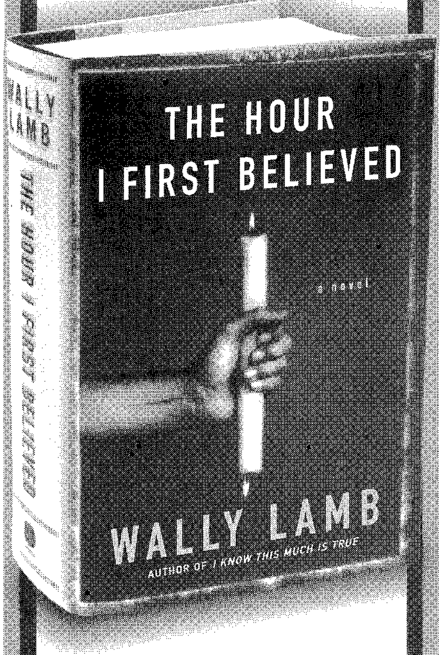
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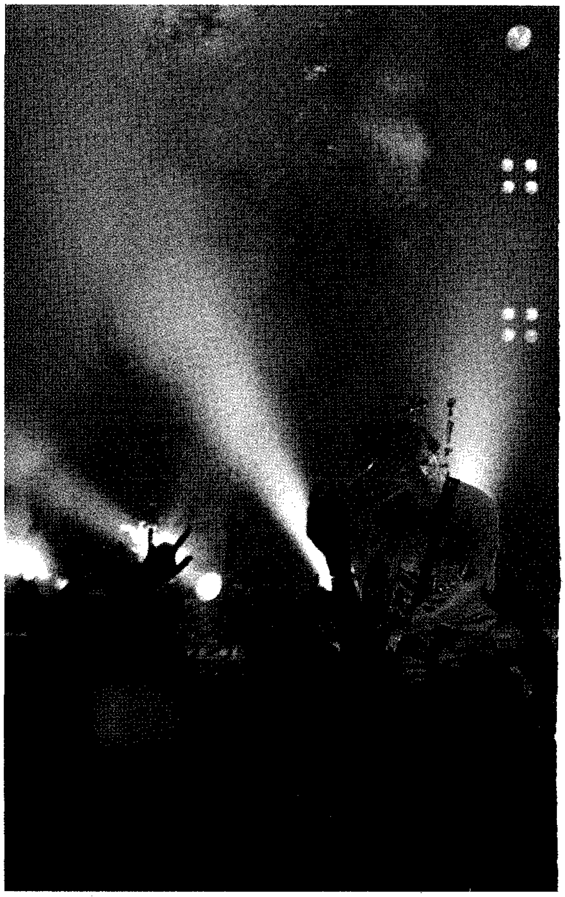

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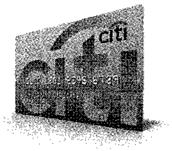

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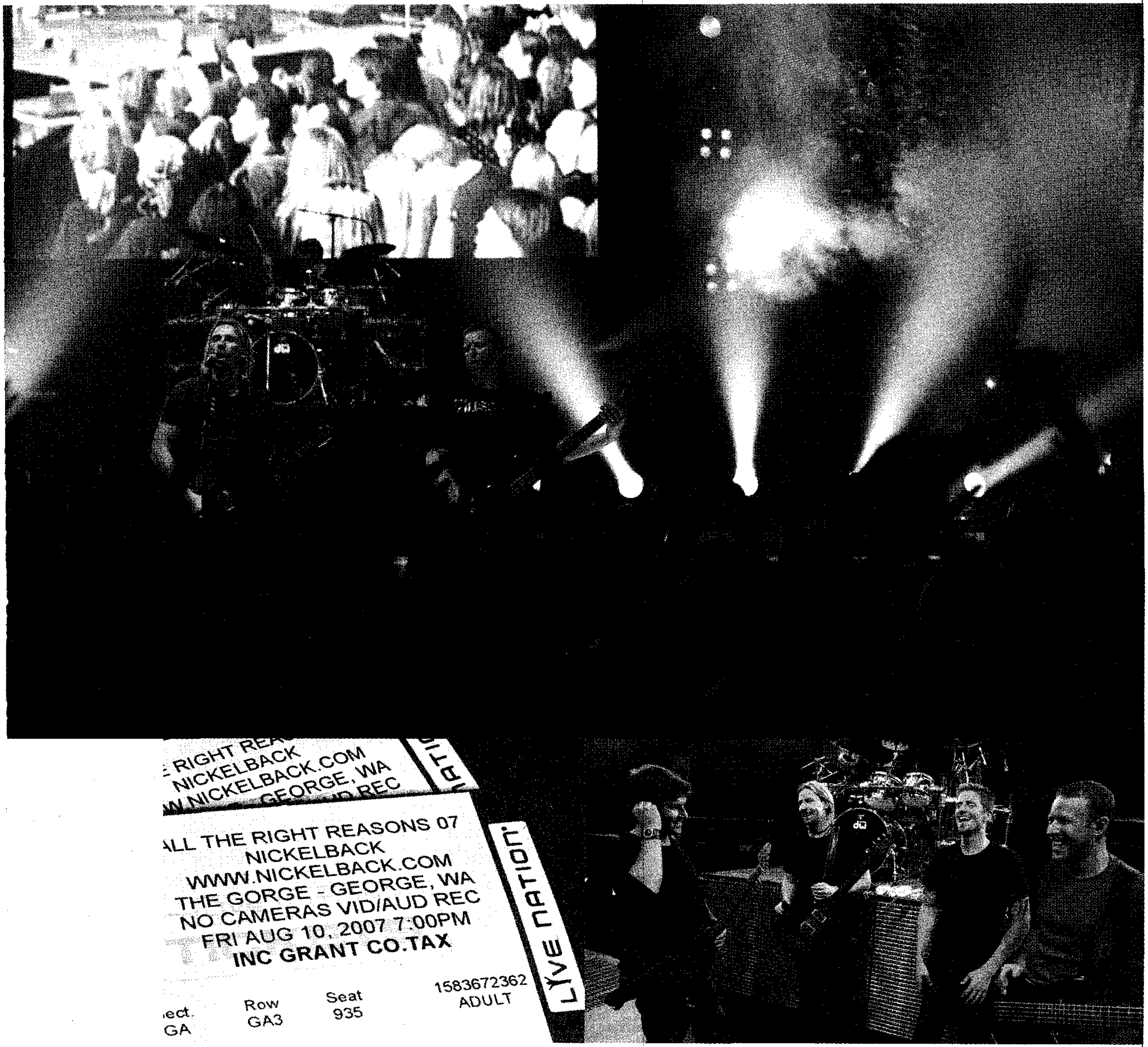
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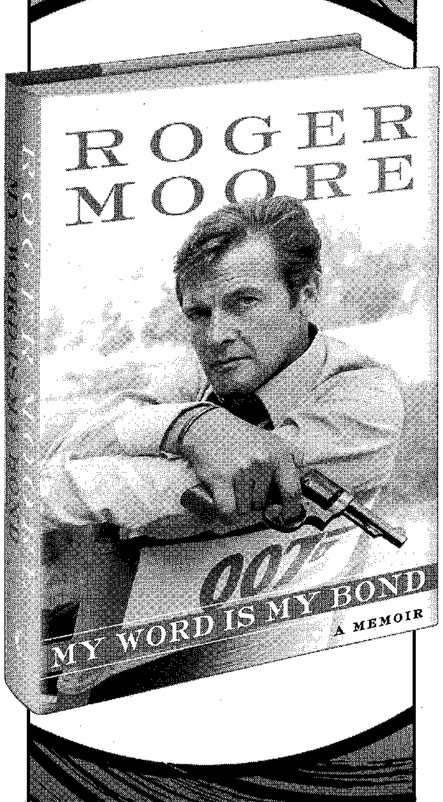

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CONTRIBUTORS

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David Grann ("The Fall," p. 56), a staff writer, will publish his first book, "The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon," in February.

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Jonathan Lethem (Fiction, p. 92) is the author of seven novels, including "The Fortress of Solitude." His next novel will be published in 2009.

Joan Acocella (Books, p. 100; Dancing, p. 108) reviews dance and books for the magazine. Her collection of essays "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints" is out in paperback.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 110) won this year's Clark Prize for Excellence in Arts Writing. His book "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*" was published in May.

Robert Wrigley (Poem, p. 82) teaches English at the University of Idaho. His most recent book is "Earthly Meditations: New and Selected Poems."

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 106), the magazine's senior drama critic, is working on a biography of Tennessee Williams.

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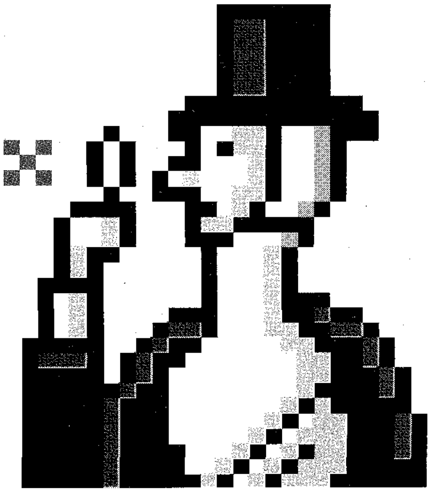

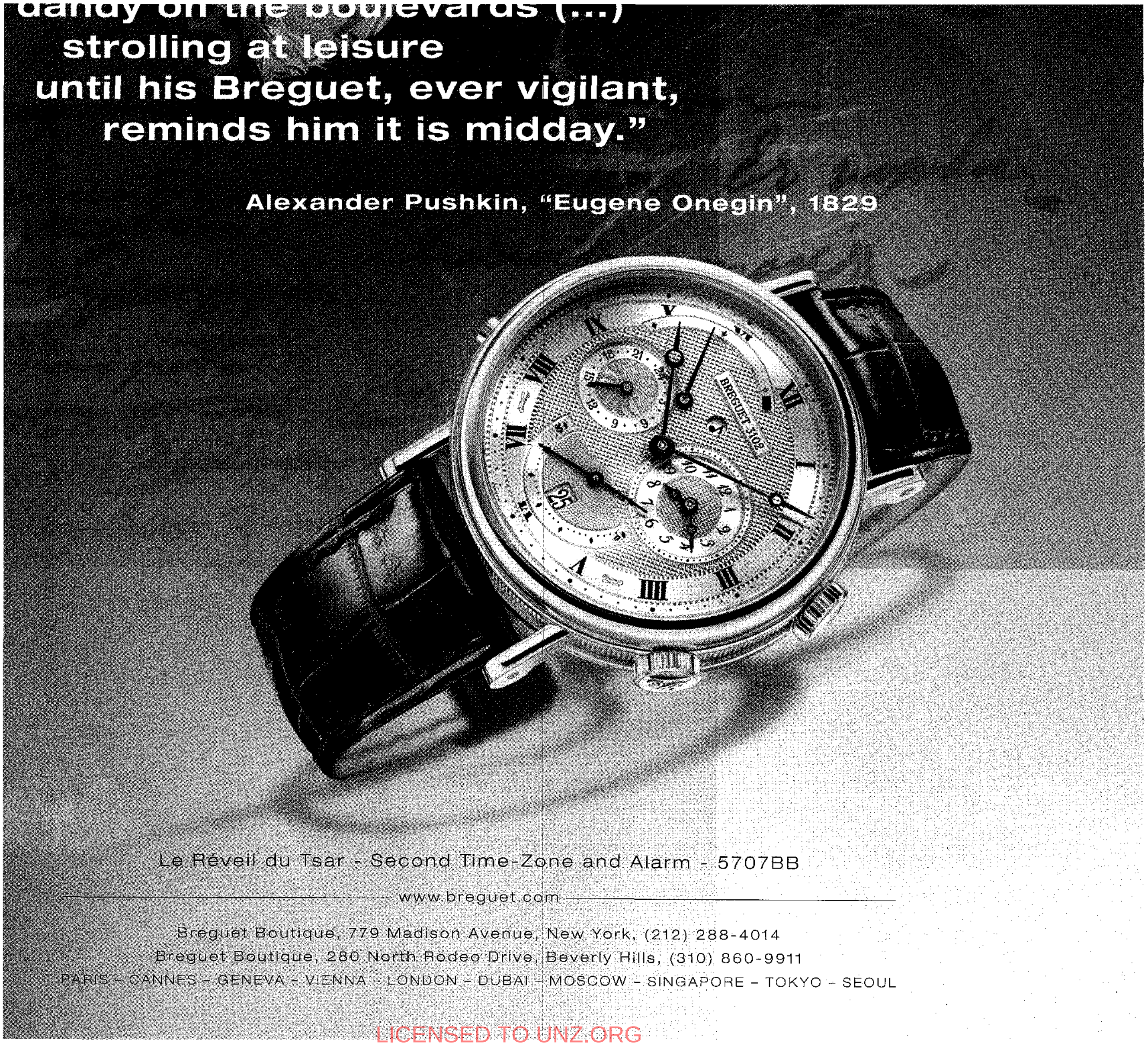
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Alexander Pushkin, "Eugene Onegin", 1829

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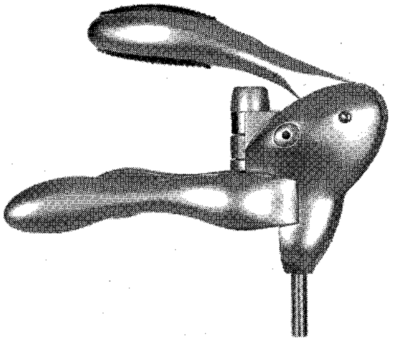

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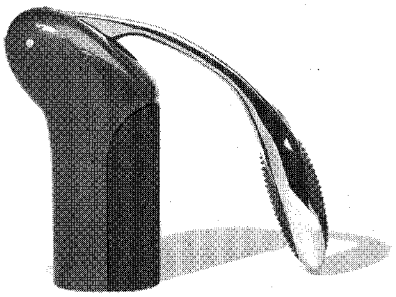

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HOW TO SAVE THE FOREST

Raffi Khatchadourian, in his article on the stolen-timber trade, briefly touches on the collective-action problems involved in sustainable forestry ("The Stolen Forests," October 6th). He notes that more than eighty per cent of the world's forests are under state control, which seems to me a major factor in illegally harvested and trafficked forestry products. Few people will expend resources or risk life and limb to protect what is essentially common property, but most will fight to protect what is theirs. While private ownership will not stop all theft and illegal trafficking, it is an important part of sustainable forestry.

Joshua Hall
Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Management
Beloit College
Beloit, Wis.

In 1992, I entered Vladivostok, one of the first foreigners to do so legally in many decades, eager to explore what may be the most diverse temperate forest on earth. I left profoundly depressed by the prospect of its rapid destruction. However, there is an important distinction to be made, which Khatchadourian mentions: while forests in the developing world are rapidly disappearing, forests in the industrial world (with the exception of Canada) are expanding. In much of Europe and North America, there is more forest today than at any time in the last half a millennium, although it is often less biodiverse than virgin forest. An essential part of the strategy to save the world's forests must include encouraging forestry in affluent countries where guidelines are well established.

Lars Norgren
Manning, Ore.

VIOLENCE FROM WITHIN

Jon Lee Anderson, in writing about the state of Zimbabwe, captures what colleagues and I witnessed when we travelled to the country in 2007 in order to document mounting preëlection violence ("The Destroyer," October 27th). We recorded broken bones, bruises, lacerations, sleeplessness, anxiety, and depression. But the effect of witnessing repeated violence, misuse of resources, and human-rights violations doled out by a man who was originally called the country's liberator and uncle isn't so easily measured, and can produce a sense of powerlessness and a tendency toward internal division. I was surprised when the South African physicians we spoke to complained, "Why aren't Zimbabweans taking to the streets, as we did?" It is far more complicated when the perpetrator of violence is not an outsider.

Samantha A. Stewart
Program Psychiatrist
Bellevue/N.Y.U. Program for Survivors of Torture
New York City

NOT SO HARD UP

Lizzie Widdicombe, in writing about our company, Icon Recognition, refers to the troubles on Wall Street and offers a distorted view of our company (The Talk of the Town, November 10th). The reality is that we are a thriving company that, a day before Ms. Widdicombe's visit, launched a new brand and moved into a new office—one that is six times larger than our previous office—to accommodate our growing business. The conference room is immaculate, without a single box in sight, and our Lucite, crystal, and marble deal gifts are showcased in brand-new glass display cabinets. There is great excitement from our twenty-two motivated employees. Yes, we are affected by the economic downturn, like other businesses in the financial sector, but we are working hard and doing very well, contrary to the image Ms. Widdicombe portrayed.

Stephen Sokoler
President, Icon Recognition
New York City

•

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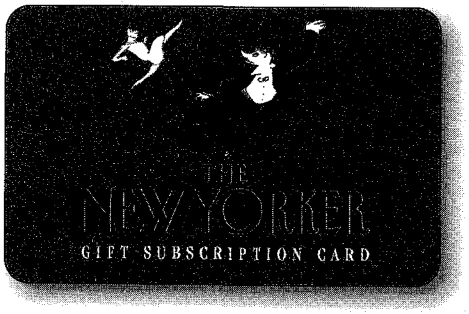

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"Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater, 1919-1949," at the Jewish Museum. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
16	17	18	12	13	14	15

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
MERRY AND BRIGHT

At the Marquis, Walter Bobbie directs "Irving Berlin's White Christmas," adapted from the 1954 movie. In this shamelessly romantic charmer, two Broadway performers spending the holiday at a Vermont inn put on a show, and get the girls while they're at it—and, of course, it snows. (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE
DO THE MASH-UP

Gregg Gillis, the master mixer and producer who records and performs under the name Girl Talk, draws on everything from soft rock to hip-hop to create his wholly original dance music. He used three hundred samples for his new album of pop-culture bliss, "Feed the Animals." When he performs live, he often invites the crowd to dance onstage with him. Expect a lot of joyous sweating over his three nights at Terminal 5. (See page 18.)

ART
RENAISSANCE FARE

Syracuse University's museum in Manhattan, the Palitz Gallery, exhibits fourteen works by Michelangelo—drawings, poems, and manuscripts, many of which have never been seen before in the U.S.—in "Michelangelo: The Man and the Myth." (See page 19.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HOUSEWORK

Leave it to Peter Sellars to stage György Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments," a moving but esoteric cycle of songs for soprano and violin, as a domestic drama about an exhausted housewife. Dawn Upshaw, accompanied by Geoff Nuttall, sings it this week at John Jay College. (See page 27.)

MOVIES
PENN CENTRAL

Had he directed nothing but "Bonnie and Clyde," Arthur Penn would long be remembered. Alongside this epochal film, Anthology Film Archives offers a batch of his other features, including "The Miracle Worker," "Alice's Restaurant," and "The Left-Handed Gun," starring Paul Newman. The director will be present for opening night. (See page 35.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE SPIRIT MOVES

The Duke Spirit are an English rock band with no decade to call their own. They stomp and swagger a bit like bands from the early nineties—a gentler and less male Rocket from the Crypt comes to mind—while also sounding as roughed up and shaky as sixties garage acts like the Sonics. Their material is an averaging out of many iterations of blues-based rock that has room for squalls of noise but sticks pretty much to songs as we know them. The driving force is the singer Liela Moss, a woman born to put her foot up on a monitor and shake her shoulder-length blond hair back and forth. In the same sonic league as PJ Harvey or the Heartless Bastards' Erika Wennerstrom, Moss stays in a whiskeyed lower range, conjuring and commanding. Neither of the group's two studio albums quite captures the pleasures afforded by this unpretentious, hard-charging band. None of this has yielded superstardom, which means you may actually find a place to stand when they play the Music Hall of Williamsburg on Nov. 16 and the Bowery Ballroom on Nov. 17.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

EDDIE GUY

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AMERICAN BUFFALO
Robert Falls directs a revival of David Mamet's 1976 play, about two junk-store habitués who involve a teen-ager in their plan to steal a coin collection. Cedric the Entertainer, Haley Joel Osment, and John Leguizamo star. In previews. Opens Nov. 17. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

BACK BACK BACK
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Itamar Moses ("The Four of Us"), about three baseball players who are involved in a steroid-use investigation. Daniel Aukin directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 18. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL
Stephen Daldry directs the musical based on the movie, about a working-class boy who discovers a love for ballet. Elton John wrote the music, and Lee Hall wrote the book and lyrics. In previews. Opens Nov. 13. (Imperial, 240 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CATCH 22
Aquila Theatre presents the world première of Peter Meineck's adaptation of the Joseph Heller novel. Meineck also directs. Previews begin Nov. 14. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

DAWN
The Flea presents a drama by Thomas Bradshaw, about an alcoholic who tries to stay sober for the sake of his wife and children. In previews. Opens Nov. 15. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

DIVIDING THE ESTATE
Horton Foote's comedy about a Texas family moves to Broadway after a run in 2006 at Primary Stages. Michael Wilson directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FARRAGUT NORTH
At Atlantic Theatre Company, Doug Hughes directs the world première of Beau Willimon's new drama, about the young press secretary of a Presidential candidate. Opens Nov. 12. (336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Martha Clarke's dance-theatre piece from 1984, derived from the Hieronymus Bosch painting, gets a revival. In previews. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

GEOMETRY OF FIRE
At the Rattlestick, Lucie Tiberghien directs Stephen Belber's play, about the relationship between an Iraq-war veteran and an Arab-American he meets in a bar. Previews begin Nov. 15. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

HOME
In Signature Theatre Company's second production of the Negro Ensemble Company season, three actors perform twenty-five roles in Samm-Art Williams's 1980 play. Set in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, it tells the story of a man who leaves his family in North Carolina and heads for New York City. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

IRVING BERLIN'S WHITE CHRISTMAS
David Ives and Paul Blake adapted the classic film for this musical, just in time for the holidays. Walter Bobbie directs. Previews begin Nov. 14. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

MY VAUDEVILLE MAN!
York Theatre Company presents a new musical based on the life of the eccentric-tap-dancing star Jack Donahue. With a book by Jeff Hochhauser, music by Bob Johnston, and lyrics by both. In previews. Opens Nov. 17. (St. Peter's, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-935-5820.)

THE NATIVE THEATER FESTIVAL
The Public presents its second annual festival featuring Native American artists. Nov. 12-15. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

PAL JOEY
At Studio 54, Roundabout Theatre Company presents the Rodgers and Hart musical from 1940, with a book adaptation by Richard Greenberg, in which an aspiring night-club owner leaves his girlfriend for a wealthy older woman. Joe Mantello directs a cast that includes Christian Hoff, Martha Plimpton, and Stockard Channing. Previews begin Nov. 14. (254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

PERDITA
The New York première of a play by Pierre-Marc Diennet, about the son of a feminist hero. Linsay Firman directs. Previews begin Nov. 13. Opens Nov. 18. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY
Playwrights Horizons presents the New York première of a new play by Craig Lucas ("Prelude to a Kiss"), directed by Bartlett Sher, about an Iraq-war soldier and his alcoholic father, who is a Vietnam vet. Starring Victoria Clark, Michele Pawk, and Jonathan Groff. Previews begin Nov. 14. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ROAD SHOW
John Doyle directs the New York première of a musical by Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and John Weidman (book), about brothers who start out in the Alaska gold rush and end up participating in the Florida real-estate boom of the thirties. Michael Cerveris and Alexander Gemignani star. In previews. Opens Nov. 18. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

SHOGUN MACBETH
Pan Asian Repertory Theatre launches its season with this adaptation, by John R. Briggs, of the Shakespeare tragedy. Directed by Ernest Abuba, with choreography by Sachiyo Ito. Opens Nov. 12. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHREK THE MUSICAL
Dreamworks Theatricals presents the musical adaptation of the film, with a book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire ("Rabbit Hole") and music by Jeanine Tesori ("Caroline, or Change"). Jason Moore ("Avenue Q") directs; Brian d'Arcy James and Sutton Foster star. In previews. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

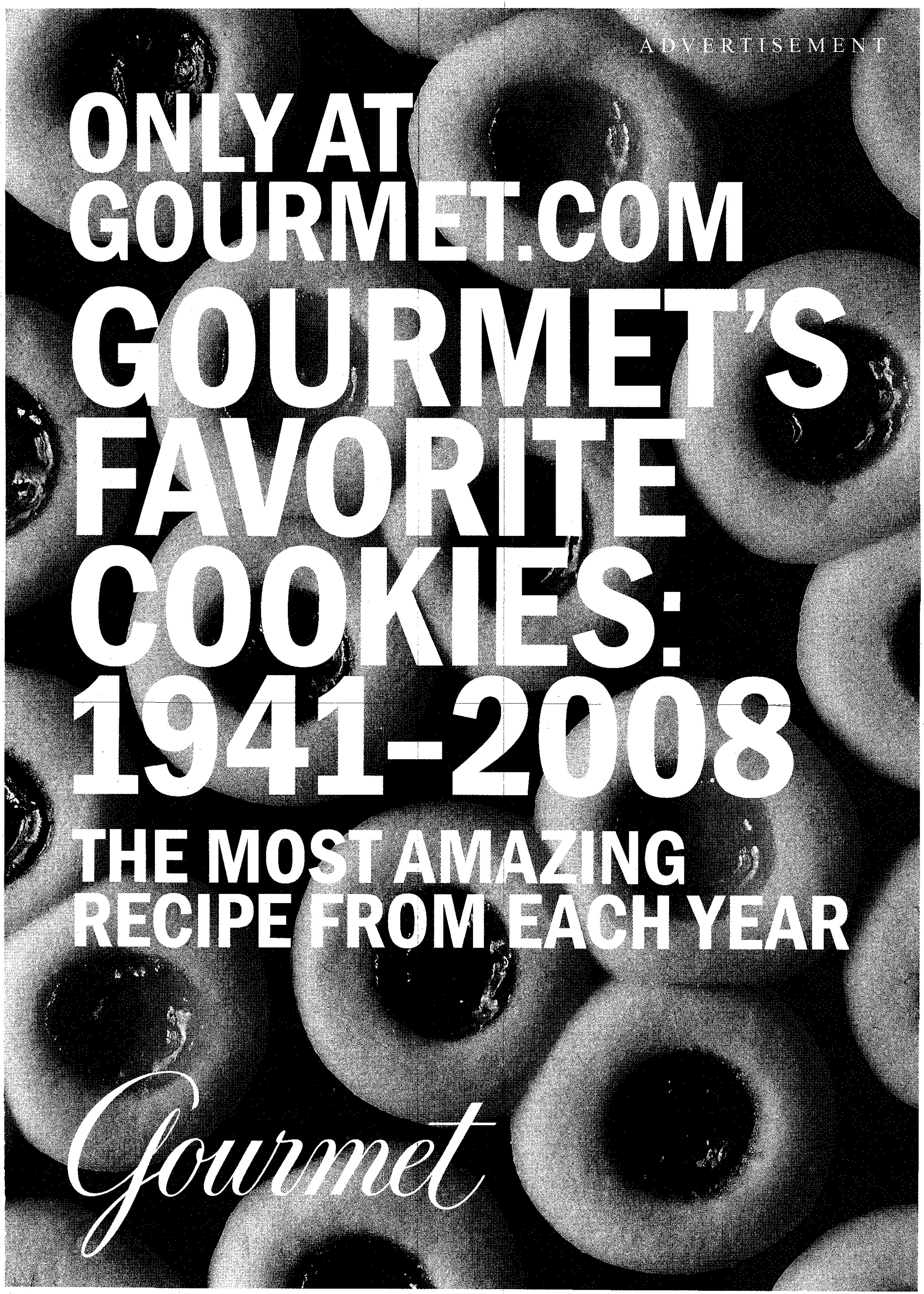
TAKING OVER
Danny Hoch wrote and performs this meditation on the gentrification of New York City, in a New York première. Tony Taccone directs. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

WAVES
Lincoln Center's Great Performers "New Visions" series includes the National Theatre of Britain's production of a play derived from Virginia Woolf's novel "The Waves," directed by Katie Mitchell. In previews. Opens Nov. 14. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-721-6500.)

NOW PLAYING

CAPTURE NOW
If effort and exertion were enough, then Josh Jonas's one-man show—about a seventeen-year-old kid from Long Island who, while trying to lose his virginity to a born-again Puerto Rican girl, loses his little brother to cancer—would be a winner. But working up a sweat while playing a handful of characters—including a five-year-old with a brain tumor—in this thin, sentimental piece is, at best, a feat of youthful exuberance; Jonas's characters are two-dimensional, and his script lacks the wisdom of genuine life experience. (The Theatres at 45 Bleecker Street, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FOOTAGE
Facebook, online role-playing games, and YouTube are factored almost ingeniously into this ambitious but ultimately overstuffed drama by Joshua Scher, in which two households, half a country apart, find themselves entangled through a number of bizarre and mostly virtual connections. Chief among these is a shared obsession with Lilah, a young woman who may or may not have been kidnapped and whose "captors" force her to perform a series of perverted and violent acts, which are then recorded and posted on YouTube. One group's debates over the reality of Lilah's situation become the catalyst for the other's dissolution, but the overcrowding of needless subplots—including a Park Slope runaway, a burgeoning online romance between fantasy creatures, and a creepy but underdeveloped Social Security scam—staunches



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a more satisfying investigation of such a promising scenario. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

GOD LOVES TINY TIM
This one-man show (playing on Sunday nights at the Richmond Shepard), written and performed by Spats White, makes the point that Tiny Tim, a.k.a. Crazy Herbie, a.k.a. Larry Love, was not just a novelty act but a "performing musicologist." Taking the stage in a pastiche of an outfit (Hawaiian shirt, tulip-appliquéd jacket, and Statue of Liberty tie), with the signature ukulele in the trademark shopping bag, Spats White succeeds in not only bringing Tiny Tim to life but making you forget he died. The impersonation (and homage) is both humorous and respectful. "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" sneaks up on you and is curiously affecting. (309 E. 26th St. 212-684-2690.)

THE GRAND INQUISITOR
Peter Brook's latest production, adapted by Marie-Hélène Estienne from a chapter of Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov," takes up Ivan's story, told to his brother Alyosha, of Christ's return to earth during the Spanish Inquisition—a parable about freedom and wretchedness, spiritual happiness and political debasement. The distinguished actor and frequent Brook collaborator Bruce Myers plays both Ivan, telling the story, and the Grand Inquisitor, enacting it. Onstage, ideas are best illustrated, not spoken, and, as this fifty-five-minute monologue drags on, Myers begins to seem more like a windbag than an authority. Listening to information about belief is far less satisfying than watching someone be transformed by it, a point that Brook himself made in his earlier work, which showed just how sacred the stage can be. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/10/08.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

LOVE CHILD
Daniel Jenkins and Robert Stanton, both successful Broadway actors, expertly play at least twelve characters between them in this bare-bones but hilarious farce. The plot involves a neurotic actor named Joel who's putting on a modern-day adaptation of a Euripides comedy in a stinky sausage factory in Red Hook. When one of the actors in the play-within-a-play steals Joel's sleeping pills and passes out, Joel's crazy mother, who's also his agent, and his crazy aunt, who, it turns out, is really his mother, emerge from the audience to rescue the show. Once onstage, the family of over-the-top thespians can't separate their own stories from the script, and astounding truths emerge. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

MOUTH TO MOUTH
The New Group opens its season with the U.S. première of a new play by Kevin Elyot. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE OEDIPUS CYCLE
Shepard Sobel directs this three-hour-plus marathon of Sophocles' still-potent Oedipus plays, about three generations of one cursed family's unending struggle against a shameful fate. The Pearl must be applauded for its noble intentions, but this very earnest production leaves much to be desired. The new translation and adaptation by Peter Constantine reaches for a kind of contemporary lyricism but winds up feeling dated and a bit portentous. Consequently, most of the actors, who are double- and sometimes triple-cast, seem more preoccupied with handling the lofty language with dignity than building characters. TJ Edwards, however, is a standout, bringing an invigorating energy to each of his many roles, especially to the older Oedipus, but unfortunately it's not enough to save this otherwise lifeless enterprise. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through Nov. 16.)

ROMANTIC POETRY
A new musical by John Patrick Shanley and Henry Krieger. (Reviewed in this issue.) (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

Also Playing

ALL MY SONS: Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLACK WATCH:** St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. **BLASTED:** SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-352-3101. **BOEING-BOEING:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. **IRENA'S VOW:** Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-352-3101. **THE LANGUAGE OF TREES:** Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE SEAGULL:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPEED-THE-PLOW:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TO BE OR NOT TO BE:** Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through Nov. 16.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 14: **Big Daddy Kane** is an elder statesman of hip-hop whose libidinous braggadocio set a template for leagues of rappers to follow. While his smooth style seems positively quaint by today's standards, his influence remains palpable. He's here celebrating the twentieth anniversary of his début album, "Long Live the Kane." Nov. 15-16: If you have any questions as to "What Is Hip?" the tight horns of **Tower of Power** are always prepared to elucidate.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 12: **Amy Ray,** of the Indigo Girls. Nov. 13: The charred-voiced Texan rocker **Alejandro Escovedo.** Nov. 14: **Nicole Atkins & the Sea** serve up engaging chamber pop. Nov. 17: The **Eagles of Death Metal** play a not so serious brand of garage boogie, with Josh Homme, the vocalist and guitarist for the group Queens of the Stone Age, on drums. With the **Duke Spirit.**

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 12: Two sets, with two fine guitar-playing vocalists working off a blues base. **Susan Tedeschi's** brand-new record is "Back to the River," featuring songwriting collaborations with the swamp rocker Tony Joe White, the Jayhawks' Gary Louris, and her husband, Derek Trucks. **James Hunter's** latest, "The Hard Way," finds the Englishman plying a groovy uptown blues style—Chicago by way of London.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Nov. 13: **Jolie Holland,** a former member of the NPR staple the Be Good Tanyas, has an easy way with traditional American music. Jazz, folk, blues, and country all boil in her personal cauldron. Holland first became interested in old-time music from listening to the Pogues, though, so don't expect to be coddled. Her last album was called "Springtime Can Kill You," and her new one is "The Living and the Dead." The opening act is **Herman Dune,** folk-pop rockers with the catchy and honest sensibility of Jonathan Richman—if Richman sang with a thick French accent (the slightly nomadic act is from France, though they claim to have roots in Sweden). Now primarily a duo of the brothers David-Ivar and Neman Herman Dune (a Ramones-esque construction; their real names are a closely guarded secret), they have just released a new album, "Next Year in Zion." Angela Carlucci and Crystal Madrilejos, of the harmonious duo the Baby Skins, sing backup.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 13: **Forro in the Dark** brings the blue-collar party music of Brazil's northeastern interior to life.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Nov. 12: **Djin Aquarian,** the guitarist and main composer behind an obscure seventies Southern California cult band called Children of the Sixth Root Race, performs songs from the group's long-lost yet newly released album, "Songs from the Source." The group was part of a religious sect founded in the late sixties by a spiritual leader named Father Yod, which lived communally and operated a semi-famous vegetarian restaurant on Sunset Boulevard named the Source. (Woody Allen memorably ordered "mashed yeast" there during the breakup scene in "Annie Hall.") This 1973 recording, the tapes of which were found in a Chicago-area basement two years ago, was culled from a live rehearsal in Father Yod's garage. The songs, driven by guitars, gongs, and group singing, have a passionate hippie-gospel exuberance that leads one to wonder: what if "Hair" had been sung by true believers?

"LET'S ZYDECO"
Nov. 16: The concert series dedicated to the various indigenous musical forms of Louisiana presents the **Savoy Family Cajun Band,** led by the accordionist Marc and the singer and guitarist Ann. The Savoys run an accordion shop in Eunice, where they hold Saturday-morning jam sessions that are open to all comers. Their family band is limited to their sons, Joel, on lead fiddle, and Wilson, on keyboards and fiddle. (Connolly's, 121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 13: **Little Joy,** a new band out of Los Angeles led by the Strokes' drummer, Fabrizio Moretti, has a sultry throwback sound that's true to its name. The group is rounded out by Rodrigo Amarante, of Los Hermanos, and Binki Shapiro, Moretti's girlfriend. Nov. 14: The artist and singer-songwriter **Jeffrey Lewis** is a whip-smart native New Yorker who makes "low-budget documentaries," narrated and illustrated set pieces, accompanied by ramshackle garage folk—about Communism, the English cult musician Mark E. Smith and his band the Fall, Barack Obama, and other disparate subjects. He's headlining a bill of some of the finest acts from New York's anti-folk scene. The first is **Urban Barnyard,** which plays nothing but songs about animals in New York City, from gay penguins at the Central Park Zoo to drug-addicted squirrels in Tompkins Square Park. The four-piece band switches instruments, singers, and styles for just about every song. Next up is **Professor Louie,** which is the stage name of Lewis's rapping uncle. The sweet and heavy guitar-and-drum duo, **Schwervon!** follows, before Lewis and his band, the Jackals, take over. Nov. 15: The **Giraffes** are a local outfit of mustachioed Lotharios who specialize in high-volume rock. Though plumbing the topical depths of the rock-and-roll-outlaw lifestyle is assuredly clichéd, the Giraffes do it with irreverent aplomb.

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—Nov. 14: **James McMurtry,** a Texas bar-stool historian (and son of the novelist Larry McMurtry) who writes taut narratives about El Caminos and small towns swallowed up by big cities. Nov. 16: The **Eagles of Death Metal** and the **Duke Spirit** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Nov. 18: The power trio **Secret Machines** appeared earlier this decade with a sprawling sound and aesthetic that married the cinematic pomp of vintage Pink Floyd with the stentorian wallop of Led Zeppelin. Their live shows trade in crushing volume and blinding stage lights.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—Nov. 15-16 and Nov. 18: **Girl Talk** is Gregg Gillis, an inventive d.j. and remixer renowned for his brazen disregard for copyright laws. He splices together samples from myriad recognizable pop hits and sculpts them into entirely new—and irresistibly danceable—songs. The results sound at once entirely familiar and strikingly original, not unlike a more frenetic version of the Beastie Boys' watershed album, "Paul's Boutique." Nov. 17: **Iron and Wine,** led by the South Carolina native and former University of Miami film professor Sam Beam, play soft Southern-tinged folk rock with literary aspirations. Beam, who started the project six years ago, began as a solo singer-songwriter enamored with lo-fi authenticity. Nowadays, he's often accompanied by a cohort of musicians, and his sound palette and production aesthetic tend to be more orchestral and polished. His last album, "The Shepherd's Dog," is a vaguely political collection that fea-

tures a host of instruments, including sitar and accordion. Most compelling is his mellifluous, laid-back vocal delivery, which recalls his fellow-Southerner Gram Parsons'.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Nov. 15: The raucous British ensemble **Kaiser Chiefs** returns with a new album, "Off With Their Heads." Co-produced by Mark Ronson (Amy Winehouse, Lily Allen), the record finds the band adding some danceable swing to their boisterous Brit-rock.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Nov. 14: New York's veteran gospel brass band **McCollough Sons of Thunder.** (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Nov. 11-Dec. 27: Making up in charm and erudition what she lacks in vocal skills, the cabaret mainstay **Andrea Marcovicci** presents a new show, "Marcovicci Sings Movies II."

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 11-15: The guitarist and singer **John Pizzarelli** performs material from his exceptional new album, "With a Song in My Heart," a tribute to Richard Rodgers.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 10-11 and Nov. 14-16: **Boz Scaggs,** one of the few middle-aged pop stars to convincingly delve into the Great American Songbook, celebrates the release of his new album of standards, "Speak Low." He'll have assistance from, among others, the keyboardist and arranger **Gil Goldstein.**

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The bighearted, gruff-voiced entertainer **Steve Tyrell** has the stage through the end of the year.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov. 12-16: Still going strong at ninety, the pianist **Hank Jones** is joined by three players capable of offsetting the Master's undiminished elegance: the guitarist **Russell Malone,** the bassist **Ray Drummond,** and the drummer **Victor Lewis.**

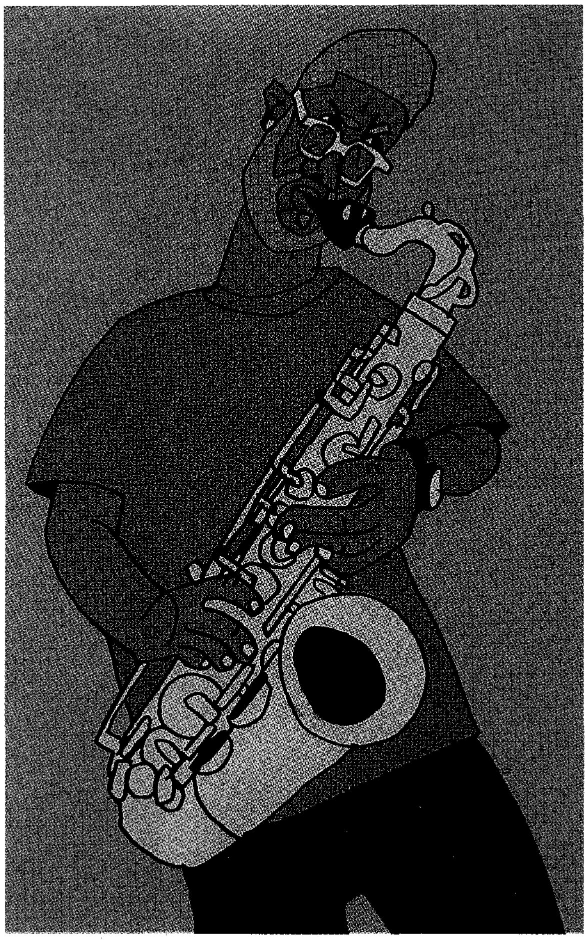
FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Nov. 11-15: Since somebody else is playing Emile de Becque in "South Pacific" at the moment, there's not much on Broadway for **Brian Stokes Mitchell,** which is good news for fans of cabaret. The Tony Award-winning star of such shows as "Kiss Me, Kate" and "Man of La Mancha" brings his dramatic, expressive baritone to a small room for five nights, where he'll nail everything from show tunes to pop ballads and swinging jazz.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—To accommodate musical passions that stretch from opera to salsa to Motown and beyond, the rabidly eclectic clarinettist and saxophonist **Don Byron** regularly juggles a number of stylistically diverse ensembles. Here, he celebrates his fiftieth birthday with four of the most significant. Nov. 13: **Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz** spotlights the mirthful King of Klezmer. Nov. 14: The **Bug Music** ensemble reshapes small-band works from Duke Ellington and John Kirby among other swing-era notables. Nov. 15: Byron's eponymous new-jazz quartet. Nov. 16: The Latin-inflected **Music for Six Musicians.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 14-15: **Ute Lemper,** unlike far too many contemporary cookie-cutter cabaret artists, isn't afraid of white-hot intensity. She has a steely wit and superb vocal technique.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 11-16: The star saxophonist **Joe Lovano** finds room for an additional percussionist, **Francisco Mela,** and the presence of the bassist **Esperanza Spaulding,** a star in the making, in his "Us 5" band. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Nov. 13: The always exuberant pianist **Michel Camilo** and his trio lead off "Just Jazz: The Joyce Wein Series," which is dedicated to the wife of the famed promoter George Wein.



Don Byron performs at the Jazz Standard Nov. 13–16.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—"**The Philippe de Montebello Years: Curators Celebrate Three Decades of Acquisitions.**" Through Feb. 1. ♦ "**Giorgio Morandi, 1890-1964.**" Through Dec. 14. ♦ "**Landscapes Clear and Radiant: The Art of Wang Hui (1632-1717).**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**Royal Porcelain from the Twinight Collection: 1800-1850.**" Through April 19. ♦ "**Raqib Shaw.**" Through March 1. ♦ "**New York, N. Why?: Photographs by Rudy Burckhardt, 1937-1940.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End.**" Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"**Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937.**" Through Jan. 12. ♦ "**Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night.**" Through Jan. 5. ♦ "**Projects 88: Lucy McKenzie.**" Through Dec. 1. ♦ "**New Photography 2008: Josephine Meckseper and Mikhael Subotzky.**" Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—"**Theanyspacewhatever.**" Through Jan. 7. ♦ "**Catherine Opie: American Photographer.**" Through Jan. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—"**William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008.**" Through Jan. 25. ♦ "**Alexander Calder: The Paris Years, 1926-1933.**" Through Feb. 15. ♦ "**Corin Hewitt: Seed Stage.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**Signs of the Times.**" Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"**Gilbert & George.**" Through Jan. 11. ♦ "**Jesper Just: Romantic Delusions.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**Coptic Sculpture.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**Burning Down the House: Building a Feminist Art Collection.**" Through Feb. 8. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"**Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future.**" Through Aug. 16. ♦ "**The Horse.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter.**" Through May 25. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—"**Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze.**" Little is known about Riccio (1470-1532) except that he trained as a goldsmith in Padua and left behind a dazzling oeuvre of bronze statuettes of satyrs, shepherds, warriors, and saints. (A sculpture of St. Jerome, the patron saint of scholars, beating his chest with a rock is required viewing for academics.) An "Entombment," with more than two dozen figures and broccoli-spear-sized trees, shows Riccio working eloquently in high relief. But the diminutive freestanding statues are the main draw, raising one's awareness of the numerous fine Renaissance bronzes placed throughout the museum, which are easy to overlook in the presence of so many incandescent paintings. Through Jan. 18. ♦ "**Frick's Vermeers Reunited.**" Through Nov. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

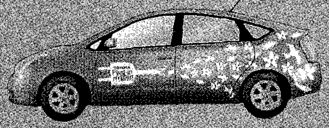
JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—"**Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater, 1919-1949.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World.**" Through Jan. 4. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

PALITZ GALLERY
11 E. 61st St. (212-754-5121)—"**Michelangelo: The Man and the Myth.**" Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 7. To purchase tickets, visit ticketweb.com.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—"**Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors.**" Through Jan. 4. ♦ "**Liszt in Paris: Enduring Encounters.**" Through Nov. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—"**Mary Heilmann: To Be Someone.**" Through Jan. 26. ♦ "**Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton.**" Through Jan. 11. ♦ "**Museum as Hub: Six Degrees.**" Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—"**Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum.**" Through Nov. 16. ♦ "**Moore in America.**" Through Jan. 11. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)



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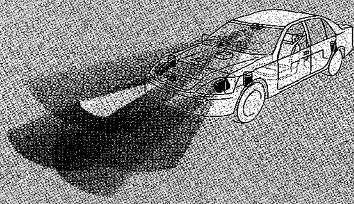

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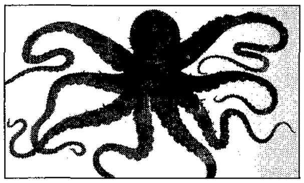
P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith."** Through Jan. 26. ♦ **"Gino De Dominicis."** Through Feb. 9. ♦ **"Leandro Erlich: Swimming Pool."** Through April 13. ♦ **"Yael Bartana."** The artist doesn't shy away from the charged politics of her native Israel. A video titled "Summer Camp" shows activist volunteers rebuilding a Palestinian home demolished by government forces, while a nineteen-thirties Zionist propaganda film, projected on the other side of the screen, celebrates a utopian homeland. Other works here alter documentary images to heighten their effect: young protesters clash with the police; men drive their sport vehicles up and down barren hills near the sea; drivers stop on the highway to honor Soldiers Memorial Day. Bartana's approach can lack sophistication—some of the manipulated images look as if they were straight out of art school—but her subtle handling of a complex subject—raising questions rather than providing pat answers—is superlative. Through Jan. 19. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Barkley L. Hendricks: Birth of the Cool."** Opens Nov. 12. ♦ **"Video Studio."** Opens Nov. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

TABLES FOR TWO
ALLEGRETTI



46 W. 22nd St. (212-206-0555)—On a forgettable block in the Flatiron district, chef Alain Allegretti, a native of Provence who has worked at Alain Ducasse's three-Michelin-star restaurant Le Louis XV, in Monte Carlo, and more recently at Le Cirque and Atelier, has bravely ventured into that riskiest of territory: the namesake haute-cuisine establishment. More famous people (including Ducasse himself) have failed at such an enterprise, but perhaps being lesser known could be advantageous: if you've never heard of the chef, how do you know what to expect?

The décor provides an inauspicious first impression. Near the entrance, an oversized leather sofa is flanked by a cluster of blue cube-shaped ottomans, kind of like MercBar circa 1997; the bar itself appears to be constructed of chocolate-veneer particleboard. The dining room, with its cream-colored walls dotted with gold-and-glass Colonial hurricane sconces and blue-and-white sea-life prints, has the air of a mid-priced hotel chain in Ocean City. (Perhaps the wood-burning oven in the corner, when it's put into use, will make things cozier.) The menu—starting with the prices—has its own ambition: a delicate *rouget* appetizer prepared with *feuille de brick* had exquisite leaves of parsley, layered with paper-thin batter, scattered atop the fillet's crispy, rose-flecked skin. The succulent braised short ribs, accompanied by a silver gravy boat filled with a deeply gratifying red-wine jus that probably takes thirty-five hours to make, was an unqualified success. Other dishes, though, faltered in their unnecessarily complicated execution. A hearty niçois ravioli contained rich, delicious oxtail, but the accompanying Swiss chard was tiresomely vegetal; the chestnut cappelletti was filled with an indistinct mash, but the burnished duck ragout underneath, infused with sweet onion and mushroom, was heavenly.

The evening ended well, with desserts like lavender-honey crème brûlée and a gooey chocolate fondant with ricotta-almond gelato. But there were hints that Allegretti might not be quite ready for star billing. An otherwise gracious waiter described what went into the wild-mushroom *trifolati* by saying, "You know, seasonal mushrooms"; when probed for specifics about the cheese plate: "Oh, there are all different types of cheeses, from all different countries." (Open Monday-Friday for lunch and Monday-Saturday for dinner. Entrées $30-$37.)

—Shauna Lyon

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

LYNN DAVIS
Although her approach to landscape and architecture hasn't changed much over the years, Davis's photographs have become more personal and more assured. Her model remains the classic nineteenth-century landscape view—detached, omniscient, definitive—but her approach warms up appreciably when her subject is a site with spiritual resonance. That's not especially apparent in her current show, which intersperses handsome images of ancient and modern temples in India with pictures of the Iguazú Falls, in Argentina and Brazil. Although the falls are stunning and the temples magnificent, there's a reserve to the work that keeps us at a distance, awe-struck but a bit chilled. Through Dec. 6. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-750-7070.)

ALEX KATZ
If most of the paintings here look familiar, it's because they've been seen in shows at the Whitney and the Jewish Museum within the past decade. But the show does offer a chance to see Katz's studies on masonite paired with his larger canvases. The eye-popping yellow-red-and-green "Ada Behind Screen Door" (1985), for example, is on view in both sketched and finished versions. Close inspection reminds one of the artist's pivotal position, as an heir to Winslow Homer and John Marin and a godfather to such younger painters as Elizabeth Peyton and Dana Schutz. Through Nov. 26. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

ABELARDO MORELL
This overcrowded hodgepodge of a show includes some terrific photographs, nearly all of them new additions to a project Morell has been working on for more than seventeen years: capturing large-scale camera-obscura projections in darkened rooms. The technique, which essentially turns the room into a huge pinhole camera, brings Central Park like a billowing green curtain into a panelled white space. Adding a prism to the process inverts the normally upside-down image, importing the Pantheon and its surrounding streetscape into a hotel sitting room in Rome. These startling, marvellous pictures overwhelm everything else here, even two photographs of stacked money that look like monuments to greed. Through Dec. 6. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

"MOLDED, FOLDED & FOUND"
Wood, brass, steel, and aluminum are among the materials favored by blue-chip sculptors in this group show, who include Louise Nevelson, Frank Stella, Anthony Caro, and Mark di Suvero. The artist doing the folding is Robert Morris, whose gray felt wall hanging from the mid-seventies looks like a giant, flattened piece of origami. Anish Kapoor and Louise Bourgeois do the molding with curious objects cast in bronze: his smooth, reflective circular blobs resting on the floor, and her shapely "Femme" suspended from the ceiling. John Chamberlain manipulates chromed steel to such a degree that it's easier to enjoy the results than to identify the process. Through Dec. 23. (Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444.)

Short List

LOTHAR BAUMGARTEN: Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Nov. 20. **HELEN FRANKENTHALER:** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Jan. 10. **PABLO PICASSO:** Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 212-734-6300. Through Nov. 29. **CINDY SHERMAN:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through Dec. 20. **LORNA SIMPSON:** Salon 94, at 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212. Through Dec. 13. **ALEXI WORTH:** D.C. Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at W. 57th St. 212-247-2111. Opens Nov. 13.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

SHARON CORE
Core, who trained as a painter, first made her impact as a photographer in 2004, with genuinely clever pictures of cakes and pies borrowed from Wayne Thiebaud's Photo-Realist pastry shop. In a new series called "Early American," her inspiration is the proto-Photo-Realist Raphaelle Peale and his tabletop still-lifes of fruit and crockery. Core's small color photographs of artfully arranged lemons, apples, and striped bass are not copies of Peale's paintings but inspired riffs on his intimate, illusionistic style that honor and tease both mediums. Bathed in unnaturally lovely light, even unlikely combinations (strawberries, their blossoms, and an ostrich egg) look not just ravishing but oddly comforting. Through Dec. 6. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

JUDITH EISLER
The painter's third show at the gallery—dosed with glamour and grit—is her strongest to date. Eisler's subject remains the moving image at rest: she works from the photographs she takes of films and videos. Each canvas isolates an almost abstract yet palpably male figure in a crepuscular glow. James Fox, in a scene from "Performance," is bathed in eerie crimson, while John Giorno, in Andy Warhol's "Sleep," appears pitilessly foreshortened in cold-corpse greens. The scene-stealer is a trio of portraits of the New York Dolls front man, Johnny Thunders, which capture the sequential soul of the cinema as the images shift from gas-flame to steely blue. Through Nov. 15. (Cohan & Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 212-206-8710.)

MATTHEW MONAHAN
Monahan's elaborate, at times overwrought sculptures play a Jekyll-and-Hyde game with the conventions of figurative art—they're monumental and fragmentary, heroic and abject, polychrome and pared down. Titles like "Rubble Friends" and "Excavation Blues" conjure an archeological dig, as do the objects themselves. Made from glass, wax, foam, pigment, silver leaf, and wood (among other materials), they're corrosive updates of Greek kouroi, the scaled-down step-kin of the Bamiyan Buddhas. Not that modernism's left out of the mix: several pieces conflate the sculpture and its pedestal, in the spirit (if not the simplified style) of Brancusi. Through Nov. 15. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

JOEL-PETER WITKIN
After more than two decades, it's hard to get worked up about Witkin's elaborately constructed photographic tableaux featuring hermaphroditic nudes, amputees, and severed body parts. No matter how sexy, weird, or unsettling, their provocations have become formulaic. Witkin draws on a tradition of the grotesque that includes Bosch, Dali, and Bacon, and his current show is full of nudging references, including a facile color series done for the Style pages of the New York *Times Magazine* that quotes Picasso, Manet, and Hopper. He still knows how to push our buttons (see "The Raft of George W. Bush"), but our responses have become numbed. Through Nov. 15. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

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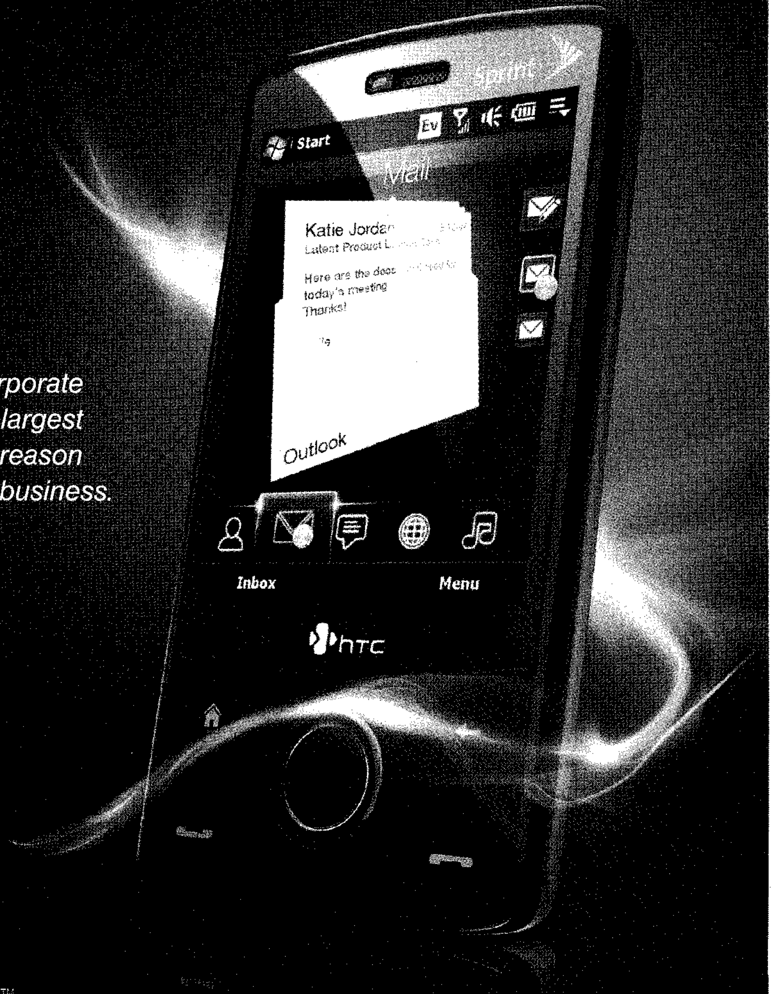

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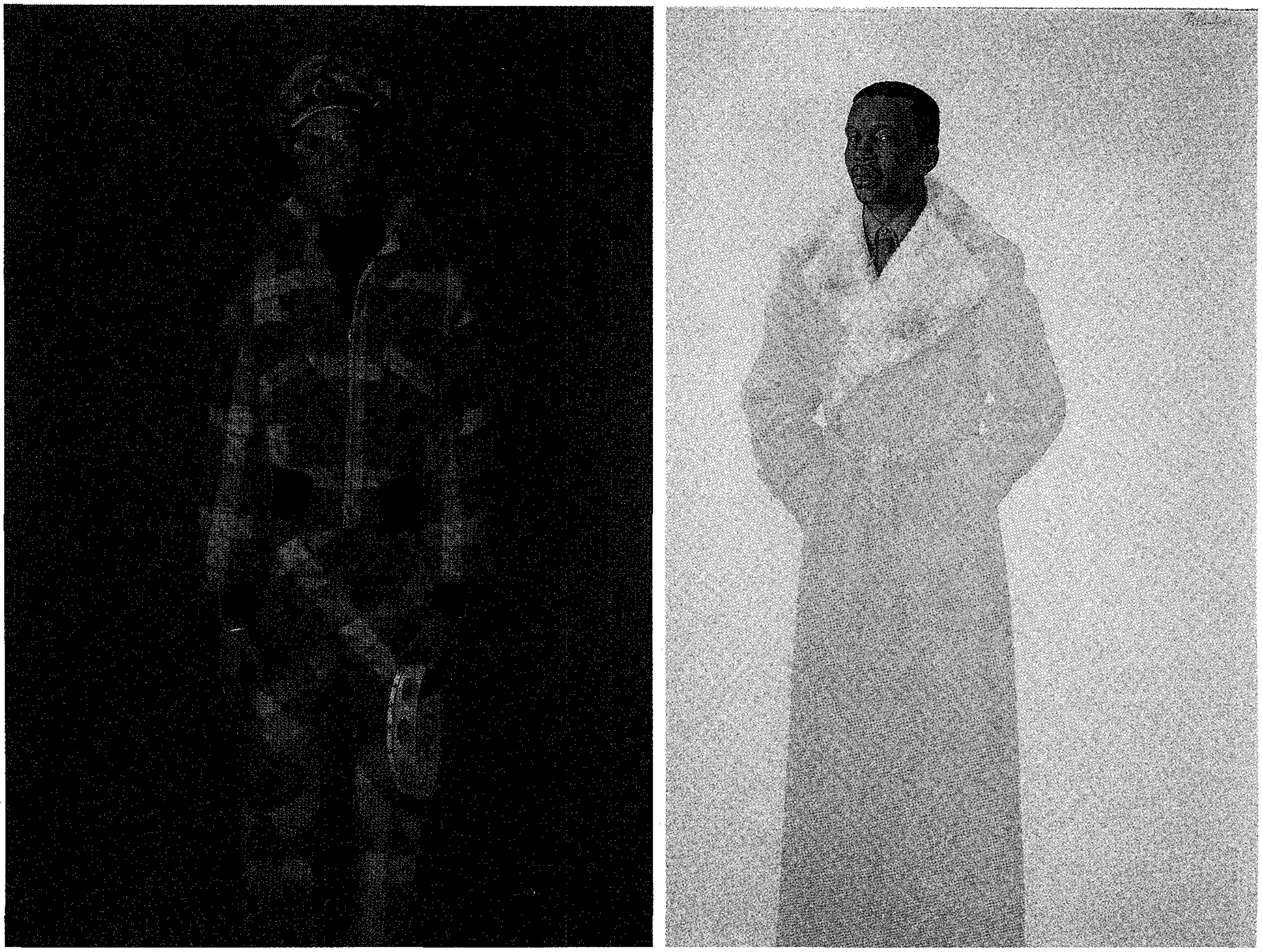


"Blood (Donald Formey)" and "North Philly Niggah (William Corbett)," by Barkley L. Hendricks, at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

COURTESY THE NASHER MUSEUM OF ART AT DUKE UNIVERSITY

Short List

ANNE CHU: 303 Gallery, 547 W. 21st St. 212-255-1121.Through Dec. 20. **RICHARD DUPONT:** Nitsch, 534 W. 22nd St. 212-645-2030. Opens Nov. 14. **STAN DOUGLAS:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Dec. 23. **ANDREAS GURSKY:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. and 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Dec. 24. **SEAN LANDERS:** Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Nov. 15. **KEITH MAYERSON:** Eller, 615 W. 27th St. 212-206-6411. Through Nov. 15. **TERRY WINTERS:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Jan. 24.

DANCE

INBAL PINTO DANCE COMPANY

In "Shaker" (made with the company's co-director, Avshalom Pollak), Pinto takes us inside a snow globe. (Joyce, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 11-12 at 7:30, Nov. 13-15 at 8, and Nov. 16 at 2 and 7:30.)

BEBE MILLER COMPANY

In "Necessary Beauty," the all-female cast executes a series of largely understated movements, dancing for each other or staring down the audience. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 11-15 at 7:30.)

LA LA LA HUMAN STEPS / "AMJAD"

In case you thought deconstruction was dead, it's not—at least, not according to the Canadian choreographer Édouard Lock, whose company comes to BAM this week. The familiar scores of "Swan Lake" and "Sleeping Beauty" get the postmodern treatment, with reworkings by David Lang (of Bang on a Can), the minimalist Gavin Bryars, and the Canadian electronic-music composer Blake Hargreaves. Lock does away with straight narrative, traditional gender roles, and grandeur, replacing them with arrow-sharp pointe work, raw athleticism, stark lighting, and highly suggestive film projections. (Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 12 at 7 and Nov. 13-15 at 7:30.)

"TRUE"

Japan Society bills this production as a collision of dance and technology. The dance part is pedestrian, but the technology is extraordinary. A casually dressed, hapless young man with a penchant for playing air guitar confronts a table of everyday objects that don't behave in everyday ways. A man in a suit (a tutor? Rod Serling?) lectures him on the paradoxes of science. Through sound effects, video, and computerized lighting, this surreal scenario crackles with uncommon theatrical magic. (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Nov. 13-15 at 7:30.)

"837 VENICE BOULEVARD"

In her new semiautobiographical trio, Faye Driscoll, a rising choreographer who likes to worry embarrassment and awkwardness as if they were loose teeth, finds fresh ways to physicalize the absurdities of identity construction, particularly the adolescent stage. Performers manipulate each other like marionettes, go spastic in psychological breakdowns, liberally throw around blame, and stumble through purposely bad dance routines. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 13-16 at 7:30. Through Nov. 22.)

SALLY GROSS AND COMPANY

A veteran of the nineteen-sixties Judson Church movement, the sculpturally adept, elegantly minimalist choreographer Sally Gross brings her small troupe to Joyce SoHo, where it will reprise last year's "The Pleasure of Stillness" and perform four new works, including "L'Autre," a solo for Gross herself. (155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 13-16 at 8.)

RISA JAROSLOW & DANCERS

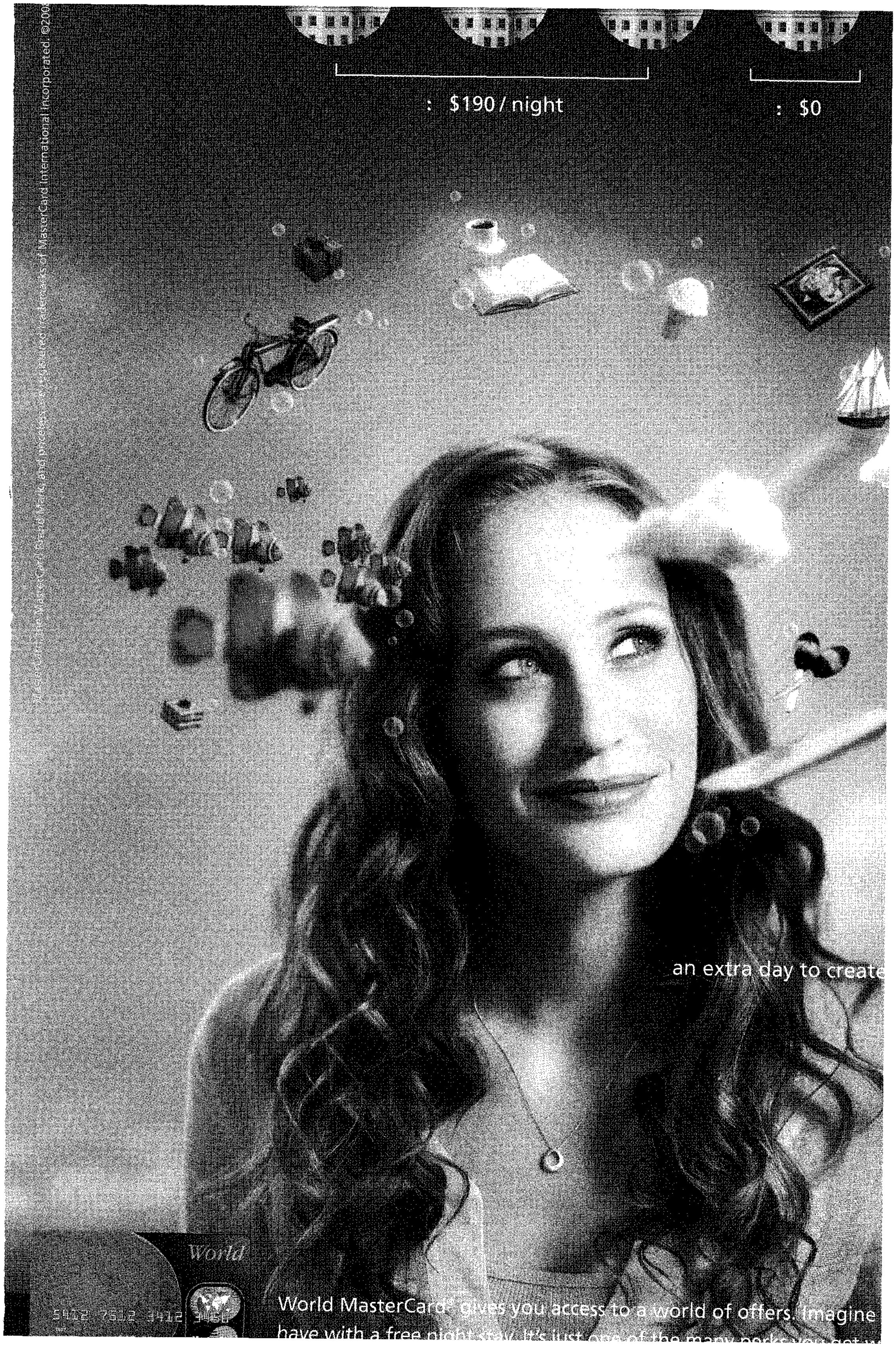
For her sixtieth birthday, Jaroslow sent out sixty letters to friends and colleagues requesting ideas for a dance. The fact that the fifteen sections of the resulting suite, "Sixty," largely hold together is a mark of her selection and skill. One thread is the contrast between her uncommonly vivid core quintet of dancers, whom she gives feats of physical daring, and the veteran choreographer and a group of her more seasoned associates, including Vicky Shick. The passage of time isn't so much mourned as noted. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Nov. 13-15 at 8:30. Through Nov. 22.)

"60X60 DANCE"

Both a testament to short attention spans and a potentially exhausting, potentially exhilarating reminder of all the artists who toil in obscurity, this free event teams up sixty mainly unknown choreographers with sixty composers to produce sixty one-minute works. The results are shown back to back as a clock ticks off the seconds. (World Financial Center, Winter Garden. Nov. 14 at 12:30 and 7.)

CIRQUE MECHANICS / "BIRDHOUSE FACTORY"

Chris Lashua, who brought nineteen-twenties-era German wheel gymnastics to new heights in his work with Cirque du Soleil, has created his own show. Inspired by early-twentieth-century factory life (and Chaplin's "Modern Times"), it is an industrial-age fable, suitable for all ages. Laid over the thin layer of plot is a rich panoply of acrobatics, breathtaking contortions, ensemble movement simulating machine works, juggling, and neat aerial tricks. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Nov. 14 at 7, Nov. 15 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 16 at noon. Through Dec. 14.)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STEELEDANCE
The company run by Teri and Oliver Steele offers "Bicipital Groove or Echo My Instincts," a surging work that confronts the transition from dancer to choreographer and teacher and the ever-widening gulf in age between the artistic directors and the newest members of the twelve-person cast. Kevin Wynn contributed to the choreography, and the trashy-chic costumes are by the Steeles. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 14 at 8:30, Nov. 15 at 3 and 8:30, and Nov. 16 at 3.)

TANGO FIRE
In what has become a trope of the modern tango show, this Argentine company takes us through a history of the form, from its romanticized origins in the Buenos Aires brothels to its subsequent passage to the salon and the Parisian night club, only to culminate, with a bang and an endless array of dramatic lifts, in the modern ballroom. Tight dresses and suspenders abound, but the dancers (and the musicians of Quatrotango) are impressive enough to produce a slick show with a few surprises along the way. (Walt Whitman, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, 2900 Campus Rd., Brooklyn. 718-951-4500. Nov. 15 at 8.)

COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET
The sexy, stylish troupe run by Desmond Richardson and Dwight Rhoden returns to the Joyce for two weeks with mostly new dancers and the same high-powered technique. The first week features three premières by Rhoden. In "Rise," ten of U2's greatest hits provide a steady beat to help anchor the choreographer's busy manner, yet the dance ends up as another example of how Rhoden's stronger ideas get buried in all of his other ones. In "I Will Not Be Broken," Richardson channels his virtuosity into a survivor dance on a bench, as the actress S. Epatha Merkerson sings spirituals live. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 18 at 7:30. Through Nov. 30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
In a very respectable revival of **"La Traviata,"** Anja Harteros, Massimo Giordano, and Željko Lučić sing handsomely against Franco Zeffirelli's glittery and dramatically inert production; the conductor, Paolo Carignani, leads his singers with a sympathy that avoids self-indulgence. (Nov. 12 at 8 and Nov. 15 at 1.) ♦ The final performance of John Adams's **"Doctor Atomic,"** with Gerald Finley (Robert J. Oppenheimer), Sasha Cooke (Kitty Oppenheimer), and Eric Owens (General Leslie Groves) leading the cast; Alan Gilbert. (Nov. 13 at 8.) ♦ Perched on the border between opera and oratorio, **"La Damnation de Faust,"** Berlioz's thrilling "dramatic legend," has long been a temptation for directors. Robert Lepage takes it on at the Met in a new multimedia production that features Susan Graham, Marcello Giordani, and John Relyea singing the roles of Marguerite, Faust, and Méphistophélès; James Levine. (Nov. 14 and Nov. 18 at 8.) ♦ Anthony Minghella's production of **"Madama Butterfly,"** now in its third season at the Met, remains the signature project of Peter Gelb's revitalizing tenure at the company. Carolyn Choa, wife of the late director, stages the revival faithfully; the puppeteers of Blind Summit Theatre contribute their special wizardry, executing the fades, pans, and closeups of Minghella's cinematic theatrical language. The soprano Patricia Racette sings splendidly in the title role, each beautiful phrase chiselled as if from marble. With Roberto Aronica, Dwayne Croft, and Maria Zifchak (a soulful Suzuki); Patrick Summers. (Nov. 15 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: "LOOKING FORWARD"
The new Gerard Mortier regime, paving the way for next season's scheduled foray into twentieth-century opera, continues its tour of the five boroughs. The program, featuring the City Opera Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by George Manahan, offers music by Britten (excerpts from "Les Illuminations," with the tenor Brian Anderson), Debussy, Messiaen, Steve Reich ("Clapping Music"), Lukas Foss, and Stravinsky (the zesty "Pulcinella"). (Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W., the Bronx. 718-960-8833. Nov. 16 at 5.)

OPÉRA FRANÇAIS DE NEW YORK: KURT WEILL'S "MARIE GALANTE"
Astonishingly, this play with music—Weill's only theatrical work in French, written after he and Lotte Lenya fled Berlin for Paris, in 1933—has never been staged in the U.S. This gallant company redresses the balance, offering three performances featuring the lovely Met soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian (in the title role), conducted by Yves Abel. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Nov. 13 and Nov. 15 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The Philharmonic works two rooms this week, with very different purposes in mind. Andrey Boryenko, a distinguished Russian conductor, takes over the main series at Avery Fisher Hall, leading a program rather close to recent events: pairing two classic works inspired by Russian folklore—Lyadov's "Kikimora" and Stravinsky's Suite from "The Firebird"—with two pieces by composers from Russia's "near abroad"—the Violin Concerto by the Armenian master Aram Khachaturian and "Abii Ne Viderem" ("I Turned Away That I Might Not See"), by the current dean of Georgian composers, Giya Kancheli. Gil Shaham lends his radiant sound and impeccable technique to the Khachaturian piece. (212-875-5656. Nov. 12-13 at 7:30 and Nov. 15 at 8.) ♦ On Nov. 14, 1943, American music changed forever when a very young (but not so green) Leonard Bernstein took over the podium for an ailing Bruno Walter in a Philharmonic concert at Carnegie Hall. The orchestra's incoming music director, Alan Gilbert, will offer an all-Bernstein concert—the "On the Waterfront" Suite, the "Serenade," and selections from "West Side Story"—at Carnegie, sixty-five years to the day. (212-247-7800. Nov. 14 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
Fred Ho—known for his virtuosity on the saxophone, his far-left politics, and the genial hulk of his presence—has pride of place in the intrepid orchestra's next concert: "When the Real Dragons Fly!," his first orchestral work. Jeffrey Milarsky conducts it along with new pieces by Clint Needham, Kamran Ince, Gregory Spears, and a winner of the 2008 Rome Prize, Keeril Makan ("Dream Lightly"). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 14 at 7:30.)

ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
The Bernstein festival continues at Carnegie Hall, with a young conductor widely hailed as his successor—Gustavo Dudamel—leading a group that was very dear to the maestro's heart. Music by Bernstein leads the program, with "Halil" and the Concerto for Orchestra ("Jubilee Games") preceding Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. (212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 2.)

KIROV ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS: "RUSSIAN DREAMS"
Valery Gergiev, the world's favorite Russian conductor, is in charge of Lincoln Center's extensive new series dedicated to the music of Sergei Prokofiev; the final two concerts (before the series resumes in March) offer three of the composer's grandest canvases. Nov. 16 at 3: An all-Russian cast sings a concert performance of **"The Love for Three Oranges,"** an adaptation of Gozzi's satirical masterpiece—which Prokofiev, oddly enough, composed while in New York. ♦ Nov. 17 at 8: Two great film scores, penned for the director Sergei Eisenstein: "Ivan the Terrible" and "Alexander Nevsky." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Nov. 12 at 7:30: The Society hosts Prague's renowned Prazak Quartet, performing two Czech masterworks—

Janáček's String Quartet No. 1 ("The Kreutzer Sonata") and Smetana's Quartet No. 1 in E Minor ("From My Life"), along with Haydn's Quartet in D Major, Op. 50, No. 6 ("Frog"). ♦ Nov. 16 at 5: The violinist sisters Ani and Ida Kavafian have been bedrocks of the Society for three and two decades, respectively. They celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their Carnegie Hall duo début with a concert featuring duos by Prokofiev, Berio, and Moszkowski as well as an intimate performance (with a host of their Society comrades) of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major (with Ida picking up her viola). (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-875-5788.)

KURTÁG'S "KAFKA FRAGMENTS"
Listeners at Zankel Hall in 2005 were unexpectedly entranced when Peter Sellars staged György Kurtág's rich and strange sequence of forty tiny Kafka settings for soprano and violin as a domestic drama about a housewife on the verge of a nervous breakdown—sung by Dawn Upshaw. She returns for this Lincoln Center revival along with her charismatic violinist companion, Geoff Nuttall (of the St. Lawrence Quartet). (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500. Nov. 12 and Nov. 14 at 8.)

MATT HAIMOVITZ, GEOFFREY BURLESON, AND DJ OLIVE
Haimovitz, the maverick cellist, comes to a suitably hip venue, (Le) Poisson Rouge, not only to join Burleson in sonatas for cello and piano by Beethoven and Elliott Carter, but also to team up with his turntable-spinning friend in works by Tod Machover and the Montreal composer Nicole Lizée (the world première of "Cryptograms"). (158 Bleecker St. www.lepoissonrouge.com. Nov. 13 at 8.)

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD AND THE OBERLIN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE
Two great cutting-edge groups—one formed at Oberlin, the other still there—will sound great together in a concert at the Kitchen devoted to music by two American legends, Steve Reich and Frederic Rzewski. In addition to the world première of Rzewski's "Knight, Death, and the Devil," the musicians will offer the first-ever all-live performance of Reich's Double Sextet (usually played along with a prerecorded tape). (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Nov. 13-14 at 8.)

VADIM REPIN
The commanding Russian violinist—with an equally impressive accompanist, the pianist Nikolaï Lugansky—performs classic sonatas by Debussy, Prokofiev (No. 1 in F Minor), and Beethoven (the "Kreutzer") at Avery Fisher Hall. (212-721-6500. Nov. 14 at 8.)

GARRICK OHLSSON
Ohlsson's piano playing is formidable as much for its intellectual finesse as for its athletic intensity. His concert at the 92nd Street Y will test both those qualities—it is all-Scriabin, ranging across the composer's career to feature the Sonatas Nos. 2, 5, and 10 and two luxurious *poèmes*, "Désir" and "Vers la Flamme." (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 15 at 8.)

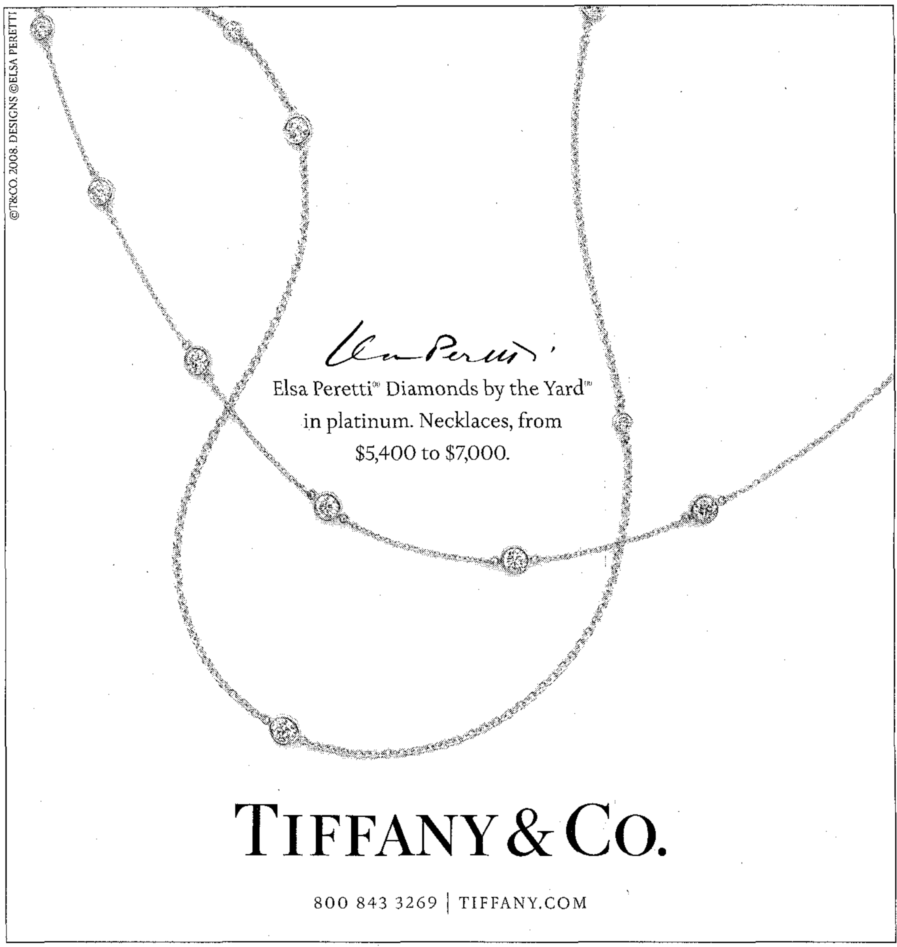
MOVIES OPENING

A CHRISTMAS TALE
Arnaud Desplechin directed this drama, about a family reunion centered around the ailing matriarch's search for a bone-marrow donor. Starring Mathieu Amalric and Catherine Deneuve. In French. Opening Nov. 14. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

EDEN
A drama, set in Ireland, about a young married couple who must confront their rocky relationship. Opening Nov. 14. Directed by Declan Reicks and starring Eileen Walsh and Aidan Kelly. (Sunshine Cinema.)

HOW ABOUT YOU
A comic drama, directed by Anthony Byrne and based on a short story by Maeve Binchy, about life in an English retirement home. Starring Vanessa Redgrave and Hayley Atwell. Opening Nov. 14. (Paris.)

QUANTUM OF SOLACE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 14. (In wide release.)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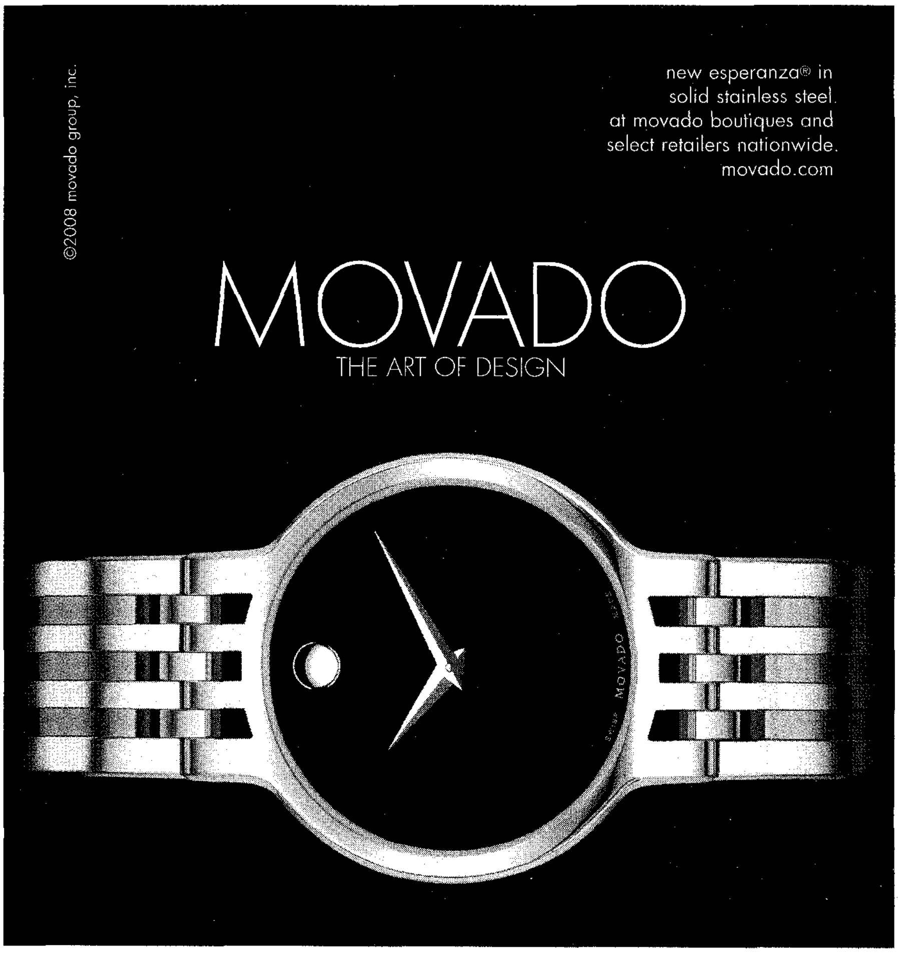
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MOVADO
THE ART OF DESIGN

WE ARE WIZARDS
A documentary, directed by Josh Koury, about young rock musicians who are obsessed with the Harry Potter books. Opening Nov. 14. (Cinema Village.)

NOW PLAYING

ALICE'S RESTAURANT
Although a number of its anti-establishment routines seemed smug and familiar even at the time, Arthur Penn's 1969 movie, about the folksinger Arlo Guthrie's freewheeling youth (based partly on Guthrie's eighteen-minute-long fluke hit, "The Alice's Restaurant Massacree"), achieves an emotional complexity rare in youth movies of any era. Many directors exploited the friction between the counterculture and the culture, but Penn also explored the gaps between hippies and their older sympathizers—especially between Arlo's pals and Alice and Ray Brock (Pat Quinn and James Broderick), who transform a deconsecrated church in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, into a nonconformist enclave. For every terrible idea there's a good one: the final prolonged shot of Quinn standing alone in a wedding gown outside the church is daring, suggestive, and inspired.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; Nov. 16.)

CAIRO STATION
The Egyptian director Youssef Chahine stars in his teeming, sharp-eyed populist drama, from 1958, which blends a sympathetic view of a wide array of characters, warmhearted glimpses of their private dramas, and audacious social criticism. At the center of the movie—set entirely in and around Cairo's central train station—is Qinawi (Chahine), an introverted, disabled homeless man, who is hired as a newspaper seller and soon gives vent to his erotic obsessions. Among the strands woven through life at the station are the struggle of Hanouma (Hind Rostom), a raucous-voiced young Mother Courage, and her all-female band of freelance soft-drink peddlers to break the official vender's cartel; the attempt of her fiancé, Abu-Serih, a porter, to unionize his colleagues despite the opposition of their corrupt boss; the proto-feminist Organization of Women Against Marriage, which protests domestic subservience; and a travelling band of blue-jeaned rockers—featuring a funky accordionist and an astonishingly expressive female dancer—who outrage religious traditionalists. Chahine even extends his humanistic viewpoint to a sex criminal whose case has long been scandalizing and fascinating newspapers readers. His richly textured, good-humored, visually forceful storytelling portrays the surging, ribald vitality of Egyptian society that squirms beneath the unjust authority of dictators and dogmatists. In Arabic.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; Nov. 12 and Nov. 15.)

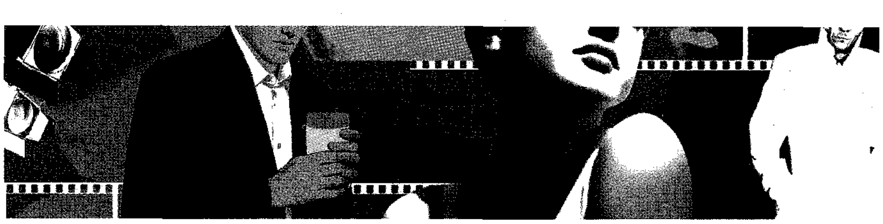
CHANGELING
Angelina Jolie stays perfectly in character (too perfectly—her performance is dull) as Christine Collins, a single mother and telephone-company supervisor in 1928 Los Angeles whose nine-year-old son is kidnapped and who then has to suffer the absurd humiliation of the L.A.P.D.'s trying to force her to accept a look-alike as a substitute. Clint Eastwood directed with extraordinary control—the mood and tone and lighting are precisely matched from one scene to the next. But the movie is dutiful rather than exciting: it's an austerely made feminist protest drama, in which the police and their various stooges condescend to Christine as a woman and therefore as someone of weak understanding. There's also a creepy subplot about a mass murderer in the desert, one of whose victims may be the missing boy, but, in the end, the movie congratulates us for indignant feelings that we already have. With John Malkovich as an impersonally benevolent Presbyterian minister who helps Christine.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/27/08.) (In wide release.)

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3: SENIOR YEAR
For the first time, the goings on at East High, that noted hotbed of voluptuous tension and intellectual clout, are visible on the big screen. Until now, the franchise has stayed within the bounds of the Disney Channel, and this third installment, directed by Kenny Ortega, cleaves to established guidelines. The young scholars still carry books around, for instance, in preference to reading them. Troy (Zac Efron) still loves Gabriella (Vanessa Hudgens) with a passion so unbridled that they are allowed to sit side by side on a hammock. He even invites her up into his tree house. But prom night beckons, as does the prospect of college, not to mention the end-of-year dramatic production: a chance for Chad (Corbin Bleu), Sharpay (Ashley Tisdale), Kelsi (Olesya Rulin), and the other regulars to parade their extravagant gifts. Though the plot feels weirdly scrappy and casual, there is a pleasing generosity to the way in which Ortega crams in as many songs as possible, often on the flimsiest of pretexts; if one tune slips from your memory before the next arrives, that's part of the deal. Much less forgettable is Ryan (Lucas Grabeel), the school choreographer, who dreams of Juilliard and dresses like a Nazi golfer.—*Anthony Lane* (11/3/08) (In wide release.)

I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG
As Juliette, Kristin Scott Thomas is first seen in closeup without makeup, her hair lustreless, her expression blank but tense. Juliette has completed a prison sentence of fifteen years for committing the unimaginable crime of murdering her six-year-old son. Her kid sister, Léa (Elsa Zylberstein), a literature professor at a university in Nancy, nervously lets her into her own family, where Juliette remains in an uneasy state of semi-silence. Written and directed by the novelist Philippe Claudel, the movie asks whether anyone who has done something so extreme can be welcomed back into the human community. And does she *want* to be welcomed back? Claudel is an observant man, he has commanded a large (and to us, unfamiliar) cast of actors to gather around his star, and he dramatizes Juliette's slow reawakening with an infinite number of small, sharply etched details. The secrets that are finally revealed about the crime are unsatisfying—one feels a little cheated—but they have the curious effect of making one want to see the movie again in order to study Scott Thomas's performance. In French.—*D.D.* (11/10/08) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

JCVD
Jean-Claude Van Damme, the "Muscles from Brussels," returns to his home town and gets caught up in a "Dog Day Afternoon"-type robbery in the director Mabrouk El Mechri's meta-movie mash-up. Van Damme, playing himself (his best role), stumbles into a heist while seeking a loan—he's broke, his career is a bust, and he needs to pay the lawyers who represented him in a custody fight. When he's mistaken for the brains behind the robbery, the film becomes a neat balancing act between the reality of Van Damme's life and a cops-and-robbers hostage drama. El Mechri's skilled direction—which lends humor to the shifting time frames and different points of view—has a slick documentary feel to it, and the biographical approach to the star (touching on Van Damme's past flops, his custody battle, drug use, womanizing, etc.) blends winningly with the action plot to produce an insightful piece of celebrity-obsessed entertainment.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

JUST ANYBODY
This new melodrama by Jacques Doillon turns on a French romantic *acte gratuit*, a mad emotional commitment intricately rationalized, but the director's intensely disciplined approach to his subject—and to his actors—renders it plausible and moving, sternly classical and resolutely modern. Camille (Clémentine Beaugrand), a young Parisian with a certain grungy class, arrives in a grim, wintry northern seaside village in pursuit of Costa (Gérald Thomassin), a local grifter who spent the night with her and took off. She soon meets Cyril (Guillaume Saurrel), Costa's childhood friend, now a plainclothes cop, but what starts as a tenuous triangle slips into a genre plot when Costa's relations with his ex-wife



DVD NOTES
THE END OF ALLEGORY

In 1975, after the critical and financial success of "A Woman Under the Influence," the director and actor John Cassavetes turned his attention to a gangland drama that he had cooked up with Martin Scorsese. The resulting movie, **"The Killing of a Chinese Bookie"** (in a two-disk set on Criterion), is Cassavetes's only genre film. When it was released in 1976, it confounded most critics' expectations and closed in a week. Yet, for the director, it was an artistic breakthrough that set the stage for his daringly personal later works.

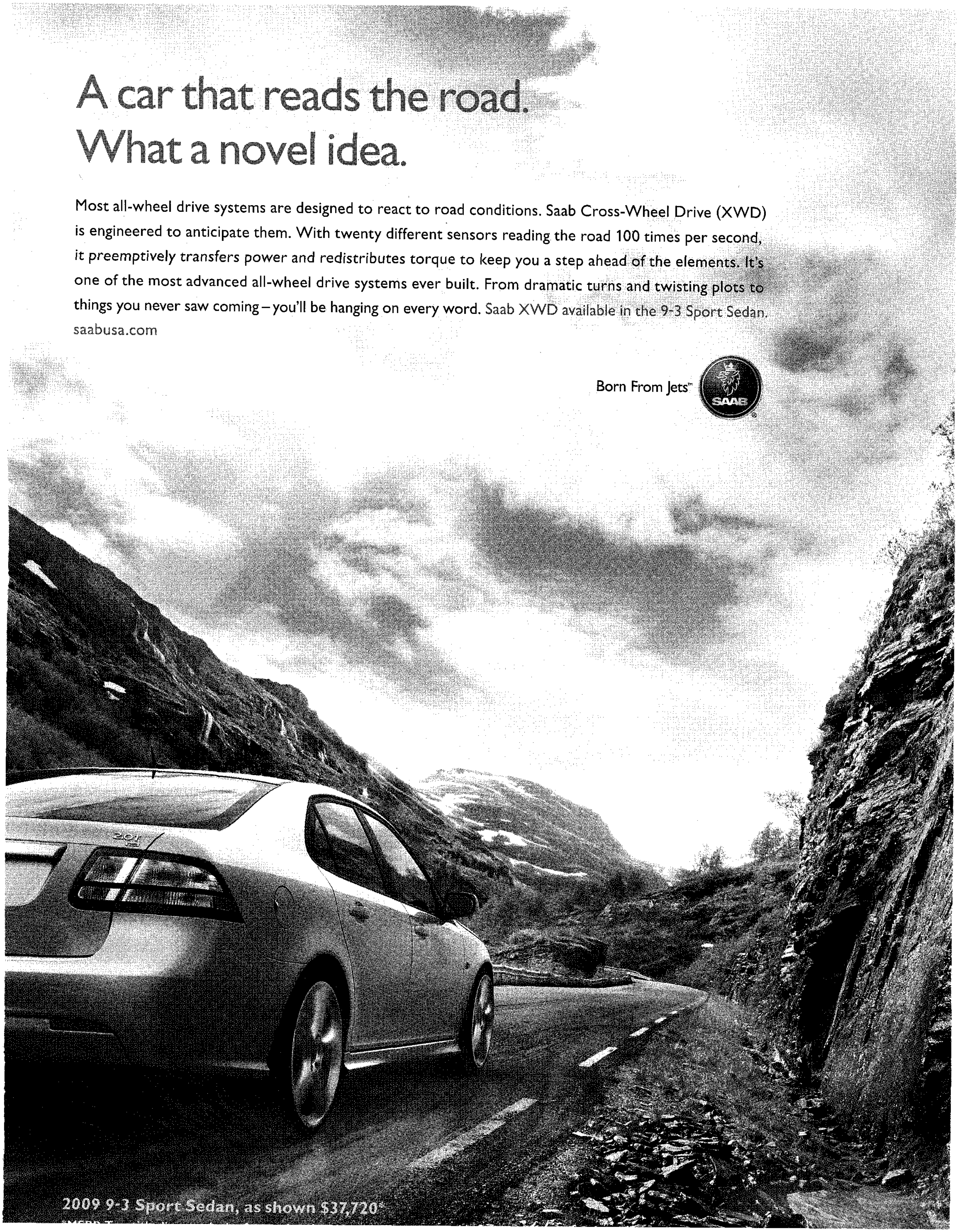
The movie stars Ben Gazzara as Cosmo Vitelli, the owner of the Crazy Horse West, a Los Angeles strip club. A bad night of poker leaves Cosmo twenty-three thousand dollars in debt to mobsters; when he cannot pay, they demand that he commit the crime foretold in the title. The story is formulaic, but Cassavetes's approach is strikingly unconventional. From the opening shot, a long take in which Cosmo is held in closeup as he pays off a seven-year debt to a small-time operator who goes unseen, Cassavetes avoids psychological motivation in favor of a Beckett-like opacity and absurd humor, and turns the story into a portrait of an artist.

Cosmo is no ordinary pander but an auteur of sorts who boasts, "I choose the numbers, I direct them, I arrange them," and whose agonized dealings with the punctilious gangsters who control his fate suggest Cassavetes's own confrontations with studio bosses. Proud of his style, an aesthete in a sharper's guise, Cosmo, whom Gazzara endows with a rueful, inward gaze, becomes a spectator of his own downfall. As is always the case in Cassavetes's films, the greatest catastrophe is the loss of love; the impresario's romance with Rachel (Azizi Johari), one of his "De Lovelies," is doomed by the very work that brings the couple together.

Two years later, Cassavetes reëdited "The Killing of a Chinese Bookie," cutting out almost a half hour to highlight the crime plot; the shorter version, featured on the second disk, leaves out too much and is paced too fast. But by that time the director had broken out of the allegorical chrysalis and made "Opening Night," a searingly intimate story about actors and directors, in which he co-starred for the first time beside his wife, the actress Gena Rowlands.

—*Richard Brody*

JOHN RITTER



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(Gwendoline Godquin) and young daughter (Noémie Herbet) turn on the need for fast money. The rail-thin Thomassin, all angles and scars and wounded bravado behind his scruffy mustache, and Beaugrand, a tall, pale beauty who hunches her shoulders and bows her head and peers out from beneath her brow through a floppy lock of hair, energetically tangle and trade etched phrases and aggressive silences in fluid long takes that seem composed of a series of sculptural tableaux. This intimate story, bringing together the northern light reflected off water, the cold wind, the fear of poverty, the weight of the past, and the lack of a future, has a soulful, epic grandeur. In French.—*R.B.* (BAM; Nov. 14.)

LET THE RIGHT ONE IN

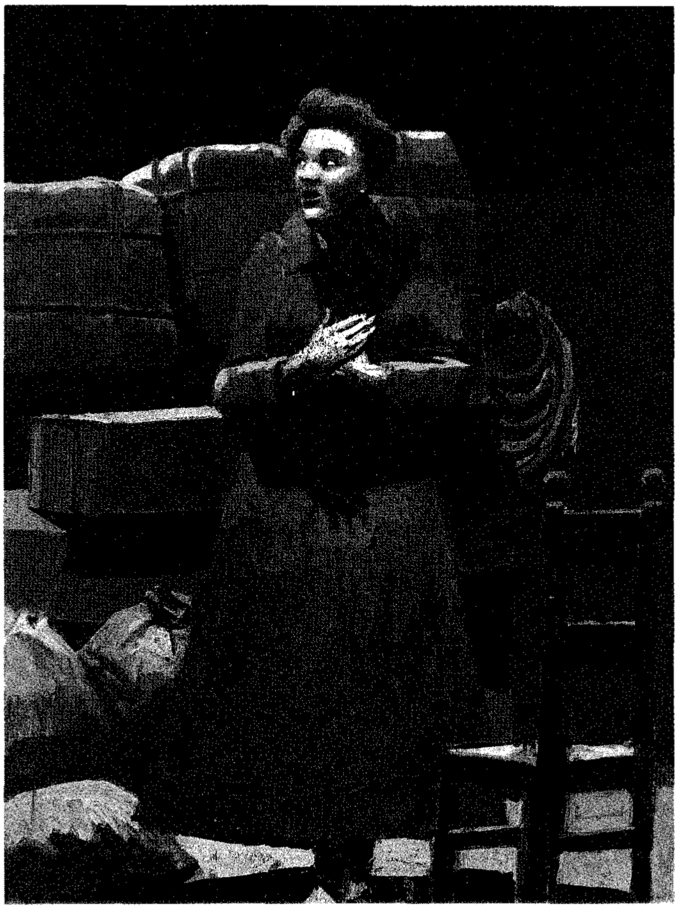
A remarkably moving horror tale, about a pale, bullied twelve-year-old boy (Kåre Hedebrant) and his first love (Lina Leandersson), who happens to be a vampire. The film is set in 1982, in a snowy suburb of Stockholm, and the director, Tomas Alfredson, captures the dark, eerie stillness of the dead of winter in long, quiet takes, endowing the loneliness of the two main characters with a touching charm. John Lindqvist, adapting his own novel, wisely keeps away from the usual histrionic violence, and the few gruesome surprises are poetically memorable. The movie deals mainly with the problems of becoming a teenager (such as the quest for self-confidence and the meaning of loyalty), and it does so with artfulness and sincerity. The results are entrancing. In Swedish.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE MATADOR

The filmmakers Stephen Higgins and Nina Gilden Seavey spent three years following the handsome young bullfighter David Fandila on his quest to become one of the world's best matadors. Their documentary, shot mostly in Spain, contains some of the most breathtaking and dramatic bullfight sequences ever shot, which stand in stark contrast to Fandila's home life, where he shyly and lovingly relies on his parents and brother for strength and comfort. Fandila's accomplishments in the bullring are intensely athletic (he's the Gene Kelly of his sport)—it's startling to see his shyness all but disappear as he becomes an intense showman in combat. The film gives time to detractors who consider bullfighting brutal, but the rich cinematography by Christopher Jenkins and James Morton-Haworth and the compelling score by John Califra portray it as a passionate spectacle. In Spanish and English.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY

D. W. Griffith's short drama, from 1912, about gangsters in a slum who prey on the local strivers, adds a radical aesthetic to a conservative, paranoid view of urban life. Lillian Gish plays a poor young woman whose musician boyfriend (Walter Miller) leaves to seek his fortune. When her mother dies (on camera), she is left to the clutches of the Snapper Kid (Elmer Booth), who, upon the musician's prosperous return, steals his money and sparks a gang war with jealous rage—but the battle takes a few surprising turns. Griffith shows a city in which the otherwise law-abiding citizens are in cahoots with their outlaw neighbors and alcohol, violence, and rapacity are the social glue. A stunning barroom scene, shot with angles borrowed from Renaissance painting, gives the repulsively clad crowd the air of an insect swarm and makes the filthy floorboards sing of sickness; a shocking modernist closeup evokes Griffith's revulsion at the crowd's unwashed bodies and unclean souls; and a recurring street scene with an Old World Jew in the foreground, obsessively counting on his fingers, suggests the usurious speculations on which, he fears, the whole show runs. Co-written by Anita Loos. Silent.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Nov. 16-17.)



The soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian stars in Weill's "Marie Galante."

ANDREA VENTURA

ONE DAY YOU'LL UNDERSTAND

From its first scene, a long and carefully choreographed tracking shot in which a man enters the Holocaust-memorial site in Paris, it's clear that the Israeli director Amos Gitai is straining to make moral statements by means of cinematic gestures. Despite the fascinating story at hand, he never lets it come to life, but smothers it beneath his arty intentions. Victor Bastien (Hippolyte Girardot), a Parisian lawyer, has become obsessed with a pile of papers belonging to his mother, Raymonde (Jeanne Moreau), née Gornick, whose parents, Russian Jewish immigrants, were deported from France during wartime and never seen again. He and his sister, Tania (Dominique Blanc), were raised Catholic and, though Raymonde never denied her origins, she never discussed them—or her wartime survival—with her children. In the course of his inquiry, which leads him to visit the small town where his maternal grandparents were arrested in 1944 (a horrific event that Gitai dramatizes heavy-handedly), he uncovers bitter family secrets, the revelation of which, after ninety minutes of generic Euro-cinema, complete with sentimental manipulation and intellectual veneer, drops with a dull thud. Even an extraordinary moment in the last shot, in which the emotional burden of memory appears with a bracing clarity, is rapidly dispelled by Gitai's self-important camera gesticulations. In French.—*R.B.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ROLE MODELS

Paul Rudd is mainly the straight man in this wan, sentimental, occasionally very funny comedy. He and Seann William Scott star as a pair of dead-end marketers shilling an energy drink to high-school students. His frustration and anger lead to a run-in with the law that gets them both sentenced to community service with a Big Brothers-like organization—and, not surprisingly, these immature adults ultimately learn to grow up by helping children in need. Most of the comedy comes from a stunning array of supporting comedians from the Judd Apatow stable (including Jane Lynch, Ken Jeong, and, especially, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, immortal as McLovin in "Superbad"), who are turned loose and allowed to riff freely, as well as from an outrageous child, Bobb'e J. Thompson, who never becomes cloying. Unfortunately, the humor repeatedly strikes the same few notes and is exhausted long before the warmhearted ending. Poor Elizabeth Banks, as a lawyer and beleaguered fiancée, once again plays a responsible mother surrogate; she and Rudd both need some hard-edged drama to expand their intelligent, lively personae. Directed by David Wain.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK

The screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, who was responsible for "Adaptation," "Being John Malkovich," and other enlivening puzzles, has now directed a film of his own. Philip Seymour Hoffman plays Caden Cotard, who starts off running a small theatre company in Schenectady, and, following a sumptuous grant from the MacArthur Foundation, ends up spending decades on an altogether grander project—constructing a chunk of alternative city within New York, in which countless characters go about their scripted lives. It is an amazing conceit, but that, unfortunately, is more or less what it remains: a conceit, which, having taken half the film to get moving, then grows increasingly hard to grasp as a practical enterprise, and even harder to believe in. Figures from Caden's world are represented, within his magnum opus, by hired actors: thus, his colleague Hazel (Samantha Morton), for whom he has an enduring affection, is played by Tammy (Emily Watson), and Caden himself by Sammy (Tom Noonan). As a reflection on the human eagerness to tell tales about ourselves, and to make good on our disappointments through art, Kaufman's movie has fine flashes of black humor, and there is no mistaking the tenderness in the performances of Morton, Watson, and, later on, Dianne Wiest; but the over-all result is a long slog, and the customary brightness of the writer's wit feels ever more clouded by the surrounding gloom. With Catherine Keener, as Caden's weary wife, and Hope Davis, as their counsellor.—*A.L.* (11/3/08) (In wide release.)

VOYAGE TO ITALY

One of the most quietly revolutionary works in the history of cinema, Roberto Rossellini's third feature starring Ingrid Bergman (his wife at the time), from 1953, turns romantic melodrama into an intellectual adventure. An English couple—Alex Joyce (George Sanders), a cynical, supercilious businessman, and his sensitive, cultured wife, Katherine (Bergman)—arrive in Naples to deal with an inheritance. As they travel alone together for the first time in eight years of childless marriage, their festering estrangement, from each other and from their comfortable way of life, bursts into open conflict. Filming on location, Rossellini devotes as much attention to the Italian settings and their cultural treasures as to the characters wandering among them; at Pompeii, the entwined bodies of lovers blasted by Vesuvius put an existential spin on Katherine's misery. Rossellini's ambitious political agenda—regarding the discontents of a new managerial class—only heightens the drama: the elegant couple's separation is wrenching, and their last chance at reconciliation is transcendently moving. Here, the young French New Wave critics learned to fuse Hollywood style with European philosophy, to make high-relief drama on a low budget.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Nov. 15.)

W.

Oliver Stone's panoramic biography of the President as a hollow shell. Josh Brolin, as George Bush, works hard at shaping his body into effective imitation: he thrusts out his chin and flexes his shoulders, walks crotch forward, like a dismounted broncobuster, and speaks in short gusts, as if each little group of words were shot from a Colt .45. Brolin can't get below the

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"Terminator" Wizard in Overdrive

The Special Effects of HDTV

Steve Galich is the special-effects coordinator for Fox TV's "Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles," a spin-off of the original "Terminator" sci-fi films. The series follows Sarah and her son, John, as they struggle to save mankind from cyborgs intent on taking over the world. Galich has had almost four decades of experience in staging the havoc of crashes, explosions, and pyrotechnics for TV as well as major motion pictures—the types of scenes enhanced by innovations like Samsung's Auto Motion Plus™ technology, which adjusts fast-moving images and eliminates blur for crisper, more fluid action. Galich talks about how HDTV has affected his work.

"HD shows *everything*—it'll show every little thing that we're doing," he says, explaining that simple tools of the trade like black masking tape can end up being visible on screen in a high-definition era. "We really have to watch our craftsmanship and how we build things. You could say it takes away some of our smoke-and-mirror gags."

It also makes shooting a smoke-filled room a new challenge. A few years ago, Galich was working on an episode of the sitcom "Oliver Beene," pumping smoke into a bar scene to give it a hazy look. "The director of photography kept telling me it wasn't enough. Well, we'd been doing this for years, and I kept thinking, 'What do you *mean* it's not enough?' I finally looked at the monitor and realized that HD cuts right through the smoke. I was flabbergasted."

In fact, in many ways, technological advancements have made it much easier for special-effects experts to

do their work, which typically involves blowing up buildings, wrecking cars, and staging gunfights. Basically, says Galich, it's a ten-year-old boy's backyard fantasy world transformed into a dream job.

But his work doesn't involve the computer-generated effects also featured in "Terminator." The series creator Josh Friedman, who liked the idea of a woman being able to infiltrate somewhere a man felt safe, envisioned one of the show's female characters morphing out of a men's bathroom fixture to create true terror. Galich explains that this was the realm of the visual-effects team: "They're the ones sitting at the computer, creating the illusion, and we're the ones building it mechanically, in front of the camera. It's a great brotherhood of talent."

Their combined wizardry is even more stunning when viewed on a Samsung high-definition TV, especially for a show like "Terminator." "It is vastly different when I can watch it at home on my sixty-inch HD with all the bells and whistles—it's just great," Galich says.

Another technological leap that lets the special-effects team hide their tricks, even in an HDTV era, is the capability to rig detonations without wires. Citing a "Terminator" episode from last season, Galich describes a scene where Cameron—the Connors' young cyborg protector, who is also possibly a threat—is shooting a machine gun out of a truck at a terminator running behind the vehicle. "Years ago we would not be able to run the guy down the street without him dragging wires, because we had to set those bullet hits off mechanically," Galich explains. "This is something the old-timers never would have tried."

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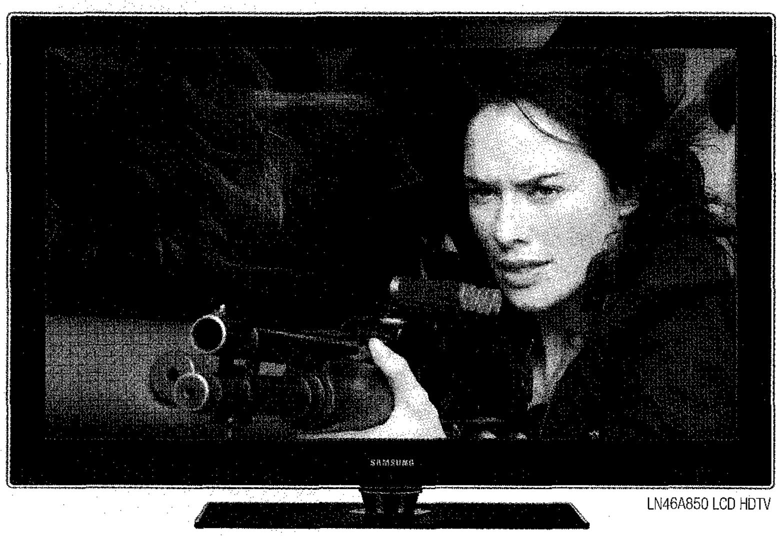
Top: Summer Glau and Galich on set; *Above;* Lena Headey and Thomas Dekker; Shirley Manson's morphed C.E.O.; *Below:* Sarah in action

Yet he's quick to give credit to the masters he learned from, in a career that has included work on "Blade Runner," "Body Snatchers," "The Devil's Advocate," "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," and "Transformers." He says he was fortunate to work with some seasoned pros who actually were the pioneers in this business. "They didn't have today's technologies, and the stuff that these guys were able to do in movies back then was unbelievable."

Consider the effort that went into shooting some of the most memorable scenes in classic films, and it's easy to understand why Galich is in awe of his mentors, one of whom he remembers as being modest about his credentials. "I would listen to him and he would let something slip, 'Yeah, when we burned Atlanta…' and I'd go, *'Excuse me?'* 'Yeah, that movie we did a while back—"Gone with the Wind."'

Fittingly for someone who works on a show that involves time travel, Galich muses about what his predecessors in the special-effects realm would make of the tools that allow him to do his job today—not to mention the crystal-clear viewing experience of a Samsung HDTV.

"To bring them here to see what we're doing now—that would be a rush."



LN46A850 LCD HDTV

TERMINATOR: THE SARAH CONNOR CHRONICLES ON FOX, MONDAYS, 8–9 P.M. ET.

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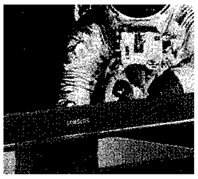

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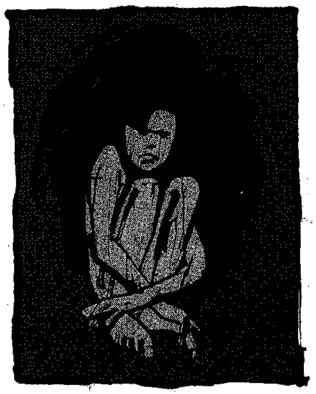

EMMANUEL GUIBERT

François Truffaut's "The Wild Child," from 1969, screening at Film Forum through Nov. 13, is a film about the simultaneous birth of consciousness and the extinction of spontaneity. Written by Truffaut and Jean Gruault, the movie is based on a true story: in 1798, a mute boy (the non-actor Jean-Pierre Cargol), naked, mud-caked, and walking on all fours, was found in the woods near Toulouse and given over to the care of a young doctor named Jean Itard (played by Truffaut). Itard, a child of both the Enlightenment and the Revolution, dresses the boy properly, teaches him to use tools, and tries to awaken his soul to morality and affection. The drama, based on Itard's fictionalized account of the events, lies in the doctor's spiritual journey; it takes us a while to realize that Itard, a scientist experimenting on a human being, is almost as strange as his subject. Nestor Almendros shot the movie in ravishing black-and-white and observes a Chardin-like reverence for such essential items of civilization as dishes, keys, and quill pens.

—*David Denby*

surface, but perhaps no actor could—the way the movie has been conceived, there are no depths to plumb. Stanley Weiser's screenplay hits the Freudian family-drama aspects of the Bush saga over and over and in the most obvious way: the hard-drinking, pleasure-loving scapegrace son can never get enough approval from his stiff-jointed father, George Herbert Walker Bush (James Cromwell), and doesn't feel at ease until he redoes the Iraq war as a reckless adventure. What we never see is Bush's cunning; many scenes with the inner circle of advisers feel like a didactic school play.—*D.D.* (10/27/08) (In wide release.)

ZACK AND MIRI MAKE A PORNO
It begins with church bells ringing in mournful disapproval of the filth that is about to be set before us. Kevin Smith, the eternally blasphemous boy from New Jersey, takes two of his going-nowhere-fast characters—Zack (Seth Rogen) and Miri (Elizabeth Banks), friends since high school and now roommates suffering through the chilly boredom of a Pittsburgh winter—and turns them into porn stars and producers. They assemble a ragtag cast and set to work, after hours, in a Starbucks-like café where Zack is a barista. Alas, the jokes are no more than occasionally funny. As a parodist, Smith doesn't have much room to maneuver. He can only make even sillier the kind of material that, at the plot level, is already hapless—the mailman at the housewife's door, the sudden urge to unzip, the simulated joy. In classic American fashion, the talk is dirtier than the sex. Through it all, Smith attempts to stage a tender love story—Rogen, bearded and then clean-shaven, looks at the lovely Banks like a beatific bull. With the adult-movie pros Katie Morgan and Traci Lords and the Smith regular Jason Mewes.—*D.D.* (11/10/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL: Cinema Village. **REPO: THE GENETIC OPERA:** In wide release. **SOUL MEN:** In wide release. **STAGES:** Film Forum.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The films and videos of Robert Frank. Nov. 12 at 7 and Nov. 16 at 5: "Me and My Brother" (1965-68, reëdited in 1997). ♦ Nov. 12 at 9: Short-film program, including "Conversations in Vermont" (1969). ♦ Nov. 13 at 9 and Nov. 16 at 7: "Candy Mountain" (1988, co-directed by Rudy Wurlitzer). ♦ Nov. 14 at 6:45: Short-film program, including "Life Dances On" (1980). ♦ Nov. 14 at 9: "Hunter" (1989; in English, German, and Turkish) and "C'est Vrai (One Hour)" (1990). ♦ Nov. 15 at 4:45: Short-film program, including "Pull My Daisy" (1959; co-directed by Alfred Leslie). ♦ Nov. 15 at 7: Short-film program, including "Run" (1989). ♦ Nov. 15 at 9:15: Short-film program, including "Moving Pictures" (1994). ♦ The films of Arthur Penn. Nov. 14 at 7 and Nov. 18 at 9:15: "The Left-Handed Gun" (1958). The Nov. 14 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 14 at 9:30: "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967), introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 15 at 4 and Nov. 17 at 7: "The Miracle Worker" (1962). ♦ Nov. 15 at 6:15: "The Chase" (1966). ♦ Nov. 15 at 9: "Mickey One" (1965) and "Homage to Jean Tinguely's Homage to New York" (1968, Robert Breer). ♦ Nov. 16 at 3:30 and Nov. 18 at 7: "Night Moves" (1975). ♦ Nov. 16 at 5:45: "Alice's Restaurant" (†). ♦ "Nov. 16 at 8:15: "Little Big Man" (1970). ♦ Nov. 17 at 9:15: Arthur Penn documentary program, including two short films by Elliot Erwitt and "The Moviemakers: Arthur Penn" (1996, Richard Schickel).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—New French films. Nov. 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "All Is Forgiven" (2007, Mia Hansen-Løve; in French and German). ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: "The Secret of the Grain" (2007, Abdel Kechiche; in French, Arabic, and Russian). ♦ Nov. 14 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Just Anybody" (†). ♦ Nov. 15 at 4:30 and 7:30: "Angel" (2007, François Ozon; in English). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Journey to the Pyrenees" (2008, Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu; in French). ♦ The films of Teuvo Tulio. Nov. 17 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Way You Wanted" (1944; in Finnish). ♦ "Pordenone Silent Film Tuesdays." Nov. 18 at 7: "Mockery" (1927, Benjamin Christensen).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 12-13 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "The Wild Child" (1970, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ The films of Les Blank. Nov. 14 at 1, 4, and 7: "All in This Tea" (2007, Blank and Nina Leibrecht). The 7 P.M. screening will be introduced by the directors. ♦ Nov. 14 at 2:25, 5:25, and 8:25: "Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers" (1980). Screenings feature "Aromaround" scents. The 8:25 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 15 at 3:10 and 7:10: "Burden of Dreams" (1982). ♦ Nov. 15 at 1:30 and 5:30: "A Well Spent Life" (1971). ♦ Nov. 16 at 1, 4:25, and 8: "J'ai Été au Bal" (1989). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2:40 and 6:15: "Hot Pepper" (1973). ♦ Nov. 17 at 1:15, 4, and 6:45: "The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins" (1969). ♦ Nov. 17 at 3, 5:45, and 8:50: "Sprout Wings and Fly" (1983). ♦ Nov. 18 at 3:35, 6:10, and 8:45: "Chulas Fronteras" (1976). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2:15, 4:50, and 7:25: "Del Mero Corazón" (1979).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"CinémaTuesdays." Nov. 18 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Mademoiselle" (1966, Tony Richardson; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Through Nov. 13: The films of Arnaud Desplechin. Except where noted, all films are in French. Nov. 12 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "Esther Kahn" (2000; in English). ♦ Nov. 13 at 1 and 9:30: "Kings and Queen" (2004). ♦ Nov. 13 at 4: "La Sentinelle" (1992). ♦ The films of Ingmar Bergman. Nov. 14-16 at 11 A.M.: "Shame"(1968; in Swedish). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Nov. 14-15: "Videodrome" (1983, David Cronenberg). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Nov. 18 at 8: "How to Draw a Bunny" (2002, John Walter), introduced by the director.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"To Save and Project." Nov. 12-13 at 6: Short films from the British Documentary Movement, including "Eastern Valley" (1937, Paul Rotha and Donald Alexander). ♦ Nov. 12 at 8 and Nov. 15 at 3:30: "Cairo Station" (†). ♦ Nov. 14 at 6:15 and Nov. 15 at 2: Short films about New York, including "Manhatta" (1921, Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler; silent), introduced by Bruce Posner. ♦ Nov. 15 at 6 and Nov. 16 at 1: "The Bird with the Crystal Plumage" (1970, Dario Argento; in Italian). ♦ Nov. 15 at 8:30 and Nov. 16 at 3:15: "The Cat o' Nine Tails" (1971, Argento; in Italian). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2: "Heart of the World" (1918, D. W. Griffith; silent). ♦ "ContemporAsian." Nov. 13-14 at 8:30, Nov. 15 at 7, and Nov. 16-17 at 5: "Dinner with the President: A Nation's Journey" (2007, Sabiha Sumar and Sachithanandam Sathananthan; in Urdu and English). ♦ "The Contenders." Nov. 14 at 6: "Intimidad" (2008, David Redmon and Ashley Sabin; in Spanish and English). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6: "Iron Man" (2008, Jon Favreau).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Nov. 14 at 9:30: "Nobody Knows" (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2004; in Japanese), introduced by the writer Annie Choi.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"Independents Night." Nov. 13 at 6:30: "Be Like Others" (2008, Tanaz Eshaghian; in Persian), introduced by the director. ♦ "Manny Farber: 1917-2008." Nov. 14 at 2, Nov. 15 at 8:30, and Nov. 16 at 6:10: "On Dangerous Ground" (1952, Nicholas Ray). ♦ Nov. 14 at 3:45 and 8:15 and Nov. 15 at 2: "Muriel" (1963, Alain Resnais; in French). ♦ Nov. 14 at 6 and Nov. 15 at 4:15: "The Roaring Twenties" (1939, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Nov. 15 at 6:30: "Voyage to Italy" (†). ♦ Nov. 16 at 1:30 and Nov. 17 at 4:15: "Me and My Gal" (1932, Walsh), "The Musketeers of Pig Alley" (†), and "In the Street" (1948, James Agee, Helen Levitt, and Janice Loeb). ♦ Nov. 16 at 3:40 and Nov. 17 at 3: "Negative Space" (1999, Christopher Petit) and "Untitled: New Blue" (1995, Paul Schrader). ♦ Nov. 16 at 4:45 and Nov. 17 at 1:30: "Wavelength"

(1967, Michael Snow) and "A Corner in Wheat" (1909, D. W. Griffith; silent). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8:15: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6:30 and Nov. 18 at 1: "Mouchette" (1967, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4:45 and 8:45: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2:45 and 6:45: "Walkabout" (1971, Nicolas Roeg). ♦ In première. "Puccini and the Young Girl" (2008, Paolo Benvenuti; in Italian).

READINGS AND TALKS

HOUSING WORKS BOOKSTORE CAFÉ
Nov. 11 at 7: "Literary Death Match," *Opium Magazine's* competitive reading series, is taping a TV pilot featuring readings that are eight minutes or less, by Mishna Wolff, Amy Sohn, Tao Lin, and Alex Rose. The judges are Ben Greenman, an editor at this magazine, the writer Lesley Arfin, and the comedian Todd Levin. ♦ Nov. 12 at 7: Amy Goldwasser, the editor of "Red: Teenage Girls in America Write on What Fires Up Their Lives Today," moderates a panel entitled "The American Teenage Girl in Fiction and Reality," with Francine Prose and contributors to the anthology. (126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.)

BARNES & NOBLE
The graphic artist Milton Glaser talks about his new book, "Drawing Is Thinking," with the writer Judith Thurman. (Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 13 at 7.)

THE NEW SALON
The poet Terrance Hayes reads from and discusses his work with Robert N. Casper, the programs director of the Poetry Society of America. (Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House, New York University, 58 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 13 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

JOSEPH MITCHELL CENTENNIAL
In the fall of 2005, the Fulton Fish Market moved upstream from its historic East River location to a new home in the Bronx. For the past three years, Naima Rauam, an artist who spent more than two decades painting watercolors of the venders and their surrounding cityscape, has organized a show to remember the market in its original location. This year happens to be the centennial of the writer Joseph Mitchell, who captured the fishmongers so memorably in these pages, and Rauam has planned accordingly. Also scheduled is a talk by Mitchell's daughter, Nora, and a reading of his work by Jack Putnam, a former market worker who is now attached to the South Street Seaport Museum, on Nov. 13 at 7. That Sunday, the 16th, Putnam leads a walking tour of the neighborhood at 2, and Nora gives another talk at 4. (210 Front St. For more information, visit www.artpm.com. The show is up through Nov. 23.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Amidst much concern regarding the direction of art markets, New York's auction houses soldier on. Last week, the big Impressionist-modern sales brought mixed results; now the emphasis is on postwar and contemporary art, starting with the all-important evening sales. **Christie's** (Nov. 12) has no dearth of eye-catchers, including a rare full-length self-portrait by Bacon ("Study for Self-Portrait") and Basquiat's "Untitled (Boxer)," from 1982, one of the cornerstones of the Brooklyn Museum's 2005 Basquiat retrospective; the latter, a raw depiction of violence and victimhood, is being sold on behalf of Metallica's Lars Ulrich. Another highlight, Lucio Fontana's brilliantly colored abstract "Concetto Spaziale, Festa sul Canal Grande," is a work from the Italian painter's 1961 series "Venezie." Morning and afternoon sales follow on Nov. 13, after which African and Oceanic art have their day (Nov. 14), with an abundance of exquisite sculptures and masks. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Yves Klein's "Archisponge (RE11)," one of the leading works to be presented at **Sotheby's** contemporary evening sale (Nov. 11), is a vibrantly tactile canvas produced by the application of the I.K.B. (or International Klein Blue) pigment, an intense ultramarine blue that the artist patented in 1960. In addition to works by Lichtenstein, Guston, and Lucian Freud, the sale offers several Warhols; a more wide-ranging day sale will be held on Nov. 12, followed by an auction of African and Oceanic art from a private collection that features a gorgeous ceremonial *malu* board from the Middle Sepik area of Papua New Guinea, carved in intricate abstract patterns. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Phillips** holds a two-day sale of contemporary art (Nov. 13-14) led by a psychedelic canvas from 2007 by the British provocateur Damien Hirst, entitled "Beautiful Artemis Thor Neptune Odin Delusional Sapphic Inspirational Hypnosis Painting." (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ If your home-decoration tastes run to Wiener Werkstätte or Scandinavian design, you're in luck: Nov. 14-17 the Park Avenue Armory hosts **"Modernism: A Century of Style and Design,"** a fair featuring furniture and decorative objects spanning the twentieth century. (Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-777-5218.)

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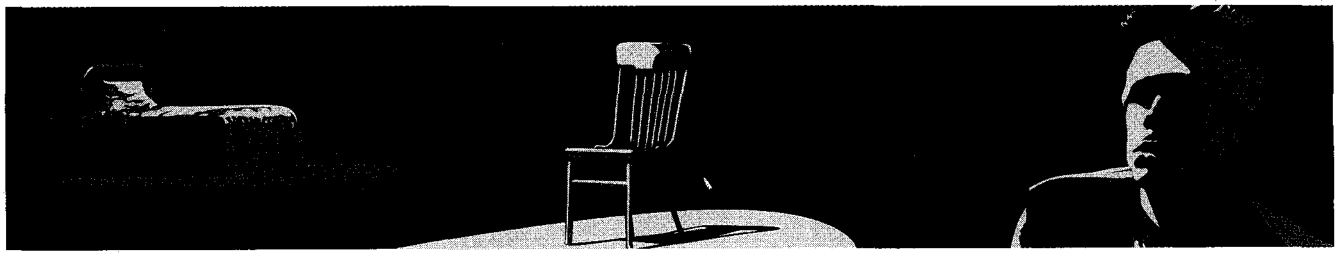

DANIEL HERTZBERG

ON THE HORIZON

ART
CREDIT SWISS
Nov. 19–Feb. 2

Born Elisabeth Charlotte Rist, the Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist changed her name in homage to the fictional character Pippi Longstocking. As one might expect, her work is irresistibly playful. MOMA will present Rist's panoramic new video, sound, and sculptural installation, "Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)," in its atrium, marking the first time that moving images will be shown in the space. (212-708-9400.)

MOVIES
LOMBARD LEAGUE
Nov. 21–Dec. 2

Carole Lombard was a second cousin of the director Howard Hawks, who put her in "Twentieth Century" and made her as funny on camera as she was in person. Film Forum offers a centenary tribute that includes that film, along with "To Be or Not to Be," "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," and others. (212-727-8110.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MORE RENÉE
Dec. 8–Jan. 8

The Renée Fleming Gala, which opened the season at the Metropolitan Opera, has yet to really end; the climax comes with a production of Massenet's "Thaïs," an opera renowned for its attractive title role, its immortal "Méditation" for solo violin, and its French Orientalist decadence. (212-362-6000.)

THE THEATRE
LUCKY CHARMS
Dec. 9

The Irish theatre director Garry Hynes, who in 1998 was the first woman to win a Tony Award for Direction, for Martin McDonagh's "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," returns to New York with another McDonagh drama. At Atlantic Theatre Company, she directs "The Cripple of Inishmaan." (212-279-4200.)

NIGHT LIFE
STEADY RAY
Dec. 12

Ray Davies, the principal songwriter and front man for the Kinks, has been trying to reunite the group; in the meantime, he has written a musical, "Come Dancing," and he continues to tour as a solo performer; he'll be at Hammerstein Ballroom. (212-307-7171.)

"The Cripple of Inishmaan," at Atlantic Theatre Company.

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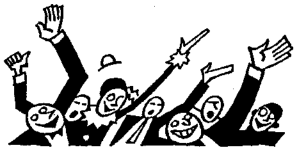
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

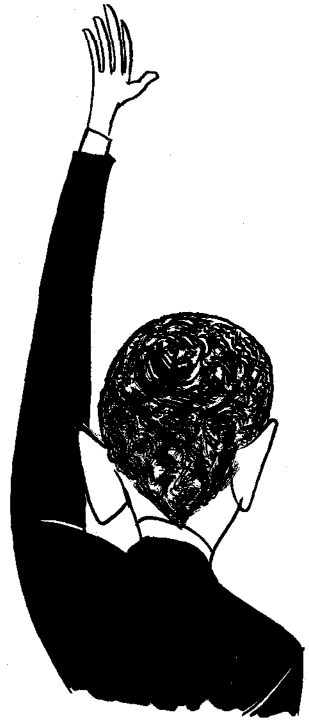
COMMENT
OBAMA WINS



Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive.
—*The New York Times*, *November 5, 2008*.

At the *Times*, it is house style to refer to a successful Presidential nominee by his full name in the lead of the main story the morning after the election. He may be Bill or Jimmy on his campaign posters, but in the newspaper of record on that one momentous occasion he is William Jefferson or James Earl, Jr. So say it loud and say it proud: Barack Hussein Obama, President-elect of the United States. Of the United States of America, as he himself liked to say on the stump—always, it seemed, with a touch of awe at the grandeur and improbability of it all.

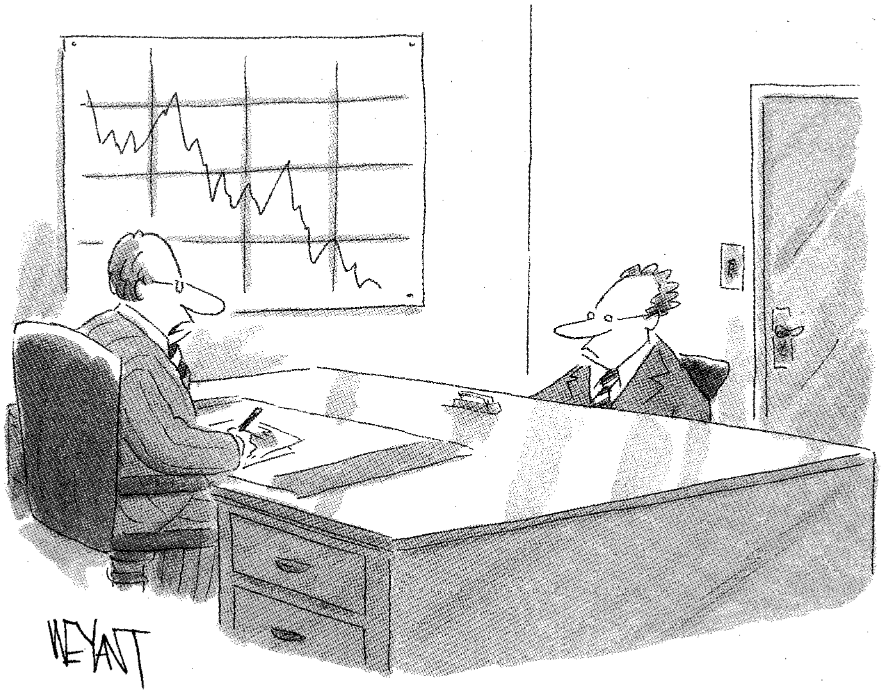
Barack Hussein Obama: last week, sixty-five million Americans turned a liability—a moniker so politically inflammatory that the full recitation of it was considered foul play—into a global diplomatic asset, a symbol of the resurgence of America's ability to astonish and inspire. In the Convention keynote speech that made him instantly famous four years ago, Obama called himself "a skinny kid with a funny name." Funny? Not really. "Millard Fillmore"—now, that's funny. The *Times* contented itself with referring to the candidate's "unusual name." Unusual? Unusual would be, say, "Dwight D. Eisenhower." Ten weeks from now, the President of the United States will be a person whose first name is a Swahili word derived from the Arabic (it means "blessing"), whose middle name is that not only of a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad but also of the original target of an ongoing American war, and whose last name rhymes nicely with "Osama." That's not a name, it's a catastrophe, at least in American politics. Or ought to have been.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Yet Barack Obama won, and won big. Democrats have now achieved pluralities in four of the last five Presidential elections. But Obama's popular vote was an outright majority—a little more than fifty-two per cent, at the latest reckoning—and the largest share for a nominee of his party since Lyndon Johnson's in 1964. Obama made significant gains compared with John Kerry, four years ago, in nearly every category that exit polls record: black folks but also white folks; liberals but also conservatives; women but also men. His gains were especially striking among Latinos, the very poor and the very well-off, Catholics and the unchurched, and the two groups most likely to be concerned about the future—young people and the parents of children living at home. And although the Obama wave does not seem to have brought with it a filibuster-proof Senate, it did sweep into office enough new members of both houses of Congress to offer him the hope of a governing legislative majority.

This election was so extraordinary in so many ways that its meaning will take many years to play out and many more to be understood. But there is already the feel of the beginning of a new era. As in 1932 and 1980, a crisis in the economy opened the way for the rejection of a reigning approach to government and the forging of a new one. Emphatically, comprehensively, the public has turned against conservatism at home and neoconservatism abroad. The faith



"No, we're not eliminating your position, Fischer. We're just eliminating your salary."

• •

that unfettered markets and minimal taxes on the rich will solve every domestic problem, and that unilateral arrogance and American arms will solve every foreign one, is dead for a generation or more. And the electoral strategy of "cultural" resentment and fake populism has been dealt a grievous blow.

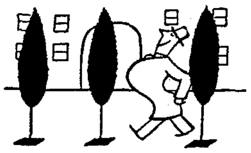
Obama is young, educated, focussed, reassuring, and energetic. He is as accomplished a writer as he is a speaker. His campaign was a marvel of discipline, organization, and prescience. He has, as a conservative critic acknowledged, "a first-class intellect and a first-class temperament." We have had these qualities in our Presidents before, if rarely all in the same person. But Obama's most visible attribute, the only one mentioned in that *Times* lead, is unique, even revolutionary: the color of his skin. As surely as Appomattox, the post-Civil War constitutional amendments, Brown v. Board of Education, and the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the nineteen-sixties, Obama's election is a giant victory in the long struggle against what an earlier generation of Republicans called the Slave Power and its long legacy of exclusion and hate.

During the campaign, Obama's "exoticism"—both real (his childhood in Jakarta) and imagined ("he's a Muslim")—served bigots as a cover for racism. But it was a shield as well as a vulnerability. It set him apart from the stereotypes of racial prejudice. It broadened rather than narrowed his "otherness." His absent father was Kenyan; if the son's line of descent includes American slaves, they are hidden on his mother's side, as they are in the lineage of myriads of this country's white citizens. His upbringing in his mother's far-flung world and the polyglot Hawaii of his white grandparents gave him the perspective of both an outsider and an insider. His search for identity—the subject of his book "Dreams from My Father," now assured of a place in the American literary canon—made him a profound student of the American dilemma. In his Philadelphia speech of March 18, 2008, prompted by the firestorm over his former pastor, he treated the American people as adults capable of complex thinking—as his equals, you might say. But what made that speech special, what enabled it to save his candidacy, was its analytic power. It was not defensive. It did not overcompensate. In its combination of objectivity and empathy, it persuaded Americans of all colors that he understood them. In return, they have voted to make him their President.

A generation ago, few people anywhere imagined that they would witness the dissolution of Soviet totalitarianism, or the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President of a multiracial South African democracy, or the transformation of China into a fearsome engine of capitalist commerce. Nor did Americans of an age to remember Selma and Montgomery and Memphis imagine that they would live to see an African-American elected President of the United States. It has happened. No doubt there will be disappointments and difficulties ahead; there always are. But a few months from now a blue-and-white Boeing 747 emblazoned UNITED STATES OF AMERICA will touch down on a tarmac somewhere in Europe or Asia or Africa, the door will open, and out will step Barack and Michelle Obama. That is something to look forward to.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL
EMANUEL IN FULL



When Barack Obama appointed Rahm Emanuel as his chief of staff last week, a bunch of old stories went back into circulation, clues, perhaps, to how he'll run the White House: Emanuel wrapping up a dead fish to send to a pollster who'd made him angry; Emanuel stabbing a table with a knife while shouting the names of people who'd betrayed Bill Clinton; Emanuel saying "Don't fuck it up" to Tony Blair. These are memorable moments, but Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Emanuel's rabbi at the Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel congregation, in Chicago, pointed out that they don't capture the whole man. "I don't know him in a political way," Lopatin said, "but I wish all our congregants were as loyal to the synagogue and as engaged as he is." Lopatin said he tries not to get involved with politics, since this can lead to trouble (see Wright, Jeremiah; "Sometimes we spir-

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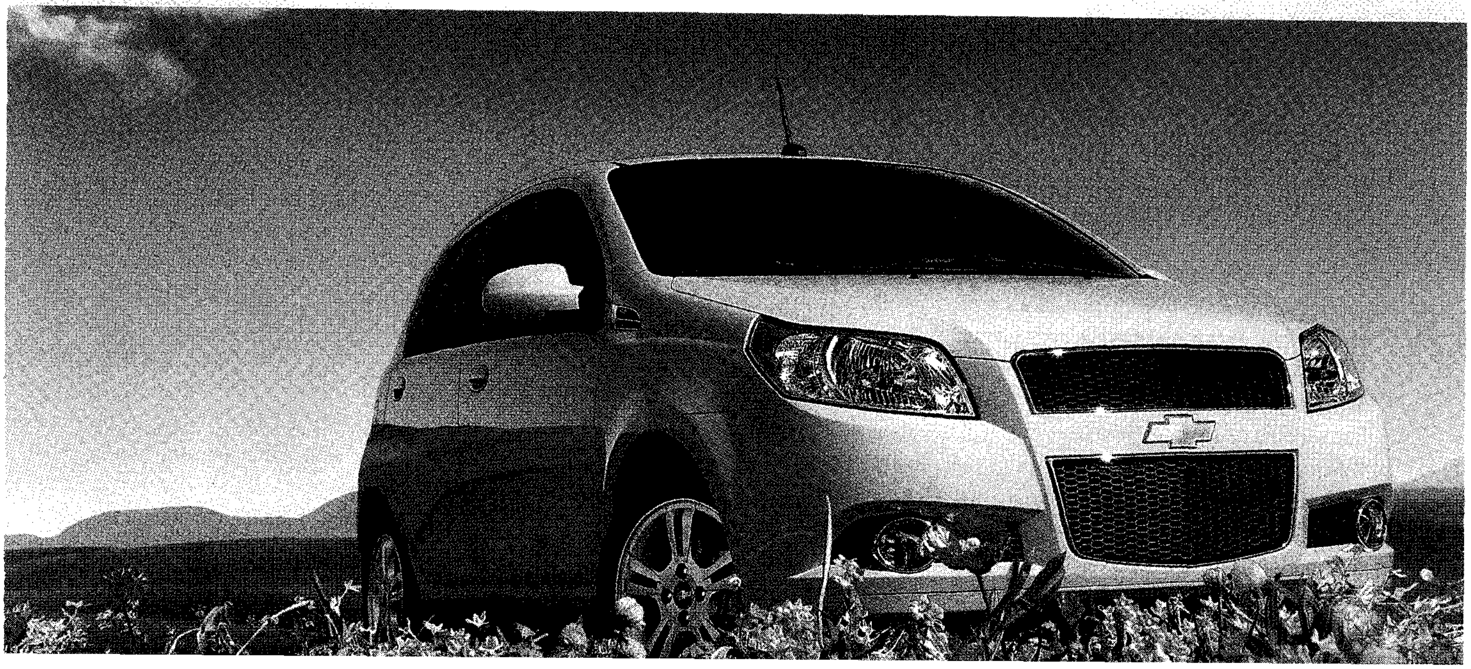
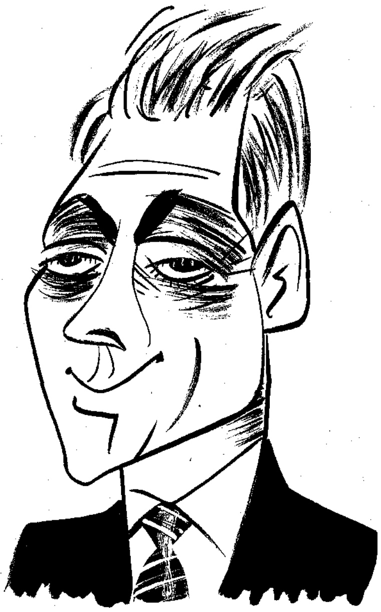


itual leaders say things we don't mean," Lopatin said), but he'd taken the liberty of leaving "a couple messages" on his congregant's voice mail. "I didn't push him one way or the other," he said. "I just wanted to congratulate him and tell him it's a good opportunity."

Emanuel, Lopatin emphasized, is "a genius at balancing things." A few weeks ago, Emanuel consulted Lopatin about working on the financial-bailout package during Rosh Hashanah. The rabbi gave his approval, citing the principle of *pikkuah nefesh*—"To save a life, you can violate almost any commandment," he said. "There's no doubt that somewhere in the world there would be a serious risk to lives and personal survival if the financial system melted down," he reasoned. So Emanuel tiptoed out of the service to take a conference call. But the rest of the time he was in synagogue. "This year, I'd asked Rahm to open the ark," the rabbi said. "We had to make sure we gave him an ark-opening time that didn't conflict with the conference call, so he could get down from the bimah in time." (Lopatin said that he had missed the episode of "Entourage" in which the character based on Emanuel's brother, the Hollywood agent Ari Emanuel, sneaks out of Yom Kippur services to talk to a studio head on his cell phone. "That is so funny!" Lopatin said. "I like Jewish characters on TV. I think it's a good thing.")



Rahm Emanuel

Last week around the same time, Ron Reagan (*that* Ron Reagan) offered his views on another facet of Emanuel—his training in ballet. Reagan, like Emanuel, is a former dancer. (Emanuel received dance training in high school, and danced for a year at Sarah Lawrence after turning down a scholarship to the Joffrey Ballet School; as a freshman, he appeared in a modern-dance piece called "Desire.") Reagan, who was a professional dancer for four years, didn't completely buy the comparison: "I'm not trying to knock him or anything, but, O.K., it's like if I'm a well-known actor—not a big star, but I appear in movies—and you're talking about someone who was in the drama club in high school." He argued that dancing and politics are "really two different parts of your brain." He said, "Politics is the art of compromise. It's shades of gray and nuance. There's nowhere to hide when you're a dancer. You're almost literally naked, wearing an outfit that reveals everything about you." He went on, "There are no Sarah Palins in dance—no one who doesn't know what they're doing. They're weeded out by the time you get to be a professional."

So that's body and spirit. Meanwhile, back at Sarah Lawrence, the nicely named Jefferson Adams, a European-history professor, was discussing his former student's mind. Adams had been Emanuel's academic adviser. (They hadn't communicated much except for one post-college phone conversation about the décor of Emanuel's first Chicago apartment. "Somehow, wagon wheels come to mind," Adams said.) He recalled that, in college, Emanuel was already raising money for political campaigns on weekends: "There was a now defunct little store, a BFO, and he was buying suits to go around fund-raising." He loved philosophy, especially the nineteenth-century German thinkers, but, Adams said, "he wasn't an academic." His papers were "good, not outstanding. They showed an involvement in the material, but nothing you'd put in an anthology. He was not a stellar writer, and he's not a great speaker. He's very effective one on one." Adams is one of the school's few conservative professors, and he remembered getting into philosophical discussions with his advisee, trying to temper Emanuel's infatuation with Hegel by showing how much Hegel had actually been influenced by Goethe—"The fact that nature is not going to be mastered, whatever the system, and that these man-made systems ultimately fail." He would also try to explain the appeal of Ronald Reagan. Adams said, "I can remember his voice: 'Mr. Adams, you can't *possibly* believe that!' "

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

CLOSE READING

VICTORY SPEECH

A theatre critic once memorably complained of a bad play that it had not been a good night out for the English language. Among other triumphs, last Tuesday night was a very good night for the English language. A movement in American politics hostile to the possession and the possibility of words—it had repeatedly disparaged Barack Obama as "just a person of words" —was not only defeated but embarrassed by a victory speech eloquent in echo, allusion, and counterpoint. No doubt many of us would have watched in tears if President-elect Obama had only thanked his campaign staff and shuffled off to bed; but his midnight address was written in a language with roots, and stirred in his audience a correspondingly deep emotion.

On Tuesday night, Obama returned to his cherished theme, the perfection of the Union. Any victorious election speech must turn campaign vinegar into national balm, must move from local conquest to national triumph, and Obama cunningly used this necessity to expand epically through American space and time. Behind his speech were the ghosts of Lincoln's First Inaugural, which moved anxiously over "every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land," and his Second, which promised to "bind up the nation's wounds." Obama quoted from the end of the First Inaugural—"We are not enemies, but friends"—and the implication was clear: that the past eight years have been a kind of civil war.

Rhetorically, his speech sought to

bind those wounds by binding us together. First, he moved through the people—young and old, rich and poor, gay and straight. Then he moved through the country—the back yards of Des Moines, the living rooms of Concord—ending, by way of the Gettysburg Address, with the earth: "from the millions of Americans who volunteered, and organized, and proved that, more than two centuries later, a government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished from this Earth." And then he moved through time, using the epic novelist's trick of a heroine as old as the century. Ann Nixon Cooper, at the age of a hundred and six, had voted in Atlanta. Obama paused to imagine all that she had seen: woman suffrage, the "despair in the dust bowl, and Depression across the land"; the start of the Second World War, when "bombs fell on our harbor" (Pearl Harbor became simply "our harbor," which was Obama's way of reclaiming Hawaii from its recent alienation—his harbor and ours); and "the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma." At the end of each witnessed decade, Obama appended a quiet "Yes we can," extraordinarily moving in its sobriety. "Yes we can" had never been much more than a motivational vitamin, too close for comfort to Bob the Builder's "Yes he can!" But by attaching the phrase to the past tense, to achieved history, Obama stripped it of its bright futurity and invested it with a measure of uncertainty, as if intoning both "Yes we did" and an implied "Yes we may."

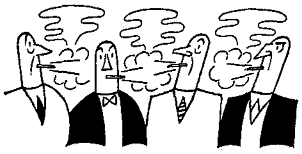
Besides Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the speech's other founder. The allusions were deeper, and quieter, than the explicit reference to King's famous phrase about how "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." (Obama said that we will put our hands "on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day.") When the President-elect warned that the road will be long, and that "we may not get there in one year or even one term, but America . . . I promise you—we as a people will get there," the word "promise" surely activated, however unconsciously, the rich narrative of exodus that found a culminating expression in King's last speech, in Memphis: "And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you." In the Memphis speech, King says that if God asked him which epoch he would like to inhabit he would want to go to Egypt in bondage, but also to Europe during the Reformation, and America when Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Borrowing, perhaps, from King's epic radiations, Obama had Ann Nixon Cooper move through her American decades, then burst into world history:

> A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was connected by our own science and imagination. And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote.

The language is plain but musical: the repeated "down" and the repeated "touched" enact the connection they describe. And then, at the end, as Obama returned once more to the Union ("that out of many, we are one") and the promised land ("if our children should live to see the next century"), his language again invoked Lincoln ("and where we are met with cynicism and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't"—that archaic "are met with" taking us back, allusively, to the Gettysburg Address): "We are met on a great battlefield of that war."

—*James Wood*

ARITHMETIC DEPT.
IN FOR IT



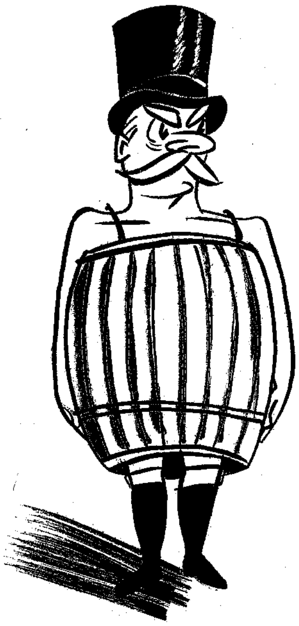
Every four years, an expat hedge-fund manager, a devout and rigorous conservative and international man of mystery, comes to New York from Europe and invites a bunch of his friends and peers to celebrate Election Night with him in a suite on the nineteenth floor of a midtown hotel. In 2004, the party, lavish and jovial at the outset, degenerated into an oppressive and cigar-smoky ordeal, a kind of Hunter S. Thompson cop-convention-on-mescaline horror show, at least for a guest rooting against the incumbent. This time around, the atmosphere was more congenial and subdued. For the Republicans in the suite, resignation had taken root weeks, if not months, earlier, and had grown into a kind of worldly indifference, grounded in the half-sincere belief that our new President, be it Obama or McCain, would be no match for the havoc in the financial markets and the spiralling economic mess. It is a widely held view among the investor classes that no one in Washington has any clue how the world really works.

There were two full bars set up in the suite, one Democratic, one Republican. The former featured spiked Hawaiian punch and Tusker beer, from Kenya. The Republican bar served an assortment of Bordeaux: a conceit losing steam. The host had his guests put on campaign buttons, according to their allegiance. McCain buttons outnumbered Obama buttons, but not by many. There was a raw bar and mini-cheeseburgers and foie gras and, in most rooms, a large flat-screen television. The Republican room, tuned to Fox, was thick with smoke. The Democratic room—CNN—was bigger and better appointed, a provision that, as one guest later put it, "resonated of an aptly Confederate grace."

The host is an economically sophisticated, socially libertarian, temperamentally provocative, professionally eccentric kind of conservative—not in the Roosevelt or Rockefeller or Palin mold but in that of Strauss and Von Mises and Johnny Ramone. For the most part, his like-minded guests were not as afraid of Obama's inexperience or his liberalism or even of the prospect of higher taxes (as one hedge-fund manager, a Democrat who has had a miserable year, said, "I don't have any capital gains. I have capital losses. There isn't anything to tax") as they were of the Treasury's extreme improvidence and the broader national lurch toward populism. Certainly, they admired Obama's historic achievement and the message that it sent to the world. In their view, though, he is in for it, and so are we.

The returns started rolling in, but the guests paid them little mind. The TVs were muted. The guests, mostly in their forties, marvelled at the size of the Fed's balance sheet, rather than that of Obama's electoral lead. One hedge-fund trader, a Democrat, said that he'd recently reread (several times) John Kenneth Galbraith's classic history "The Great Crash, 1929." He quoted two passages from memory:

"The singular feature of the Great Crash of 1929 was that the worst continued to worsen"; and "The autumn of 1929 was, perhaps, the first occasion when men succeeded on a large scale in swindling themselves." He reckoned that the autumn of 2008 was the second. His boss, looking on, seemed irritated by this display, until it became clear that he was preoccupied by the news that another man at the party had made an investor five billion dollars that year—five yards, in the vulgate. The presence of superior performance stung him.



The host predicted that President Obama would have a miserable term and face a challenge from within his own party in 2012, likely from Hillary Clinton. "You watch," he said. "In a year, the Clintons will orchestrate a campaign to declare this a failed Presidency."

Another guest, a trader and market strategist who had voted for Ralph Nader, agreed about 2012, but according to a different logic. He expounded on a belief he held regarding the cycles of history and the markets. It was based, he said, on the formula for the circumference of a circle—the idea that $2\pi r$ might apply to the financial cycle—and, in combination with various Fibonacci fractal techniques, it had made him a lot of money. You could slice up history into what he called pi cycles, each lasting exactly three thousand one hundred and forty-one days, or 8.6 years. You could subdivide these, by the hours on a clock, say, or the signs of the zodiac, and detect mini-cycles of 8.6 months. He rattled off a series of inflectionary dates and occurrences: the Nikkei high, in late 1989; the ruble collapse, in mid-1998; the historically tight credit spreads in early 2007. By God, he was onto something. Another Tusker, please. In the background, the electoral map showed that at some point during this dissertation Obama had taken Pennsylvania and Ohio.

According to pi-cycle theory, after a failed attempt at a rally between now and next spring, the market will not hit bottom until June, 2011, so Obama may be doomed to muddle through a deepening recession and the unpopularity that comes with it, and whoever succeeds him in 2012, should he lose, will then have the chance to ride the recovery—to be, in the public's untrained eye, the transformative F.D.R. or Ronald Reagan that people dearly want Obama to be now. Unless, of course, one adheres to the Venn-diagram view of history, in which case November 4, 2008, could feasibly be Day One in another pi cycle. Where they overlap is anyone's guess.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

LEGACIES
CLASS REPORT

When the news came, not late on Tuesday night, we did some hugs and high fives at my place, drank a little champagne, and dampened up at the sight of Jesse Jackson in tears amid the crowd of a hundred and fifty thousand or so in Chicago. In bed but not asleep, I thought back predictably to Selma and Birmingham, Oxford (Oxford, Mississippi), Martin Luther King, Jr., and Lyndon Baines Johnson, and tried but failed to remember another name. In the morning, it still wouldn't come—an old college classmate of mine. His name wasn't far from mine in the alphabet, which meant that he sat close to me in a couple of classes. I could almost see him, and though I never knew him or exchanged a word with him, he had been in my mind all this time—and in the minds, I'm almost sure, of most of the 1,097 of us in the Harvard Class of 1942.

I found him again in an old reunion report, and filled in the blank: Lucien Victor Alexis, Jr., of New Orleans. In our junior year, he'd been briefly in the news, when the Navy lacrosse coach refused to allow his team to take the field at Annapolis, because of Lucien's presence as a player on the visiting Harvard team. Lucien was black—the only black player on the team, just as he was the only black member of our class. The Harvard lacrosse coach refused to withdraw him, but was overruled on the scene by the Harvard athletic director, William J. (Bill) Bingham. Alexis was sent back to Cambridge on a train; Harvard played and lost, 12–0. There was a subsequent campus protest at Harvard, a petition was signed (I can't remember if I signed it), and soon afterward the Harvard Athletic Association announced that Harvard would never again withdraw a player for reasons of race. Harvard's president, James B. Conant, had been away in Europe at the time of the lacrosse incident, but when he came back he apologized to the commanding admiral at Annapolis for the breach of cordial relations that Harvard had occasioned by bringing Lucien Alexis along.

Alexis graduated and went into the service, as most of us did then. When he came back, he was accepted at Harvard Medical School but then told that he couldn't attend after all, because there was no other black student in the entering class and thus no one he could room with. He went to Harvard Business School instead. He got his degree, went back to New Orleans, married and had children, and became the head of a small business college there. He died in 1975, at the age of fifty-three. He and I belong to what has sometimes been called "the Greatest Generation." If most of us have felt uncomfortable about the honor, it may be because we've known that in some ways we haven't been all that great. The election of Barack Obama as President could mean that all of us in the United States belong to the Greatest Generation now, and though this astounding event seems to have happened all of a sudden, for some people my age it wasn't soon enough.

—*Roger Angell*

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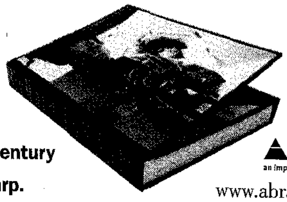

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

BATTLE PLANS

How Obama won.

BY RYAN LIZZA

Last June, Joel Benenson, who was Barack Obama's top pollster during his Presidential run, reported on the state of the campaign. His conclusions, summed up in a sixty-slide PowerPoint presentation, were revealed to a small group, including David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, and several media consultants, and, as it turned out, some of this research helped guide the campaign through the general election. The primaries were over, Hillary Clinton had conceded, and Obama had begun planning for a race against Senator John McCain.

There was good news and bad in Benenson's presentation. Obama led John McCain, forty-nine per cent to forty-four per cent, among the voters most likely to go to the polls in November, but there was also a large group of what Benenson called "up-for-grabs" voters, or U.F.G.s, who favored McCain, forty-eight per cent to thirty-six per cent. The U.F.G.s were the key to the outcome; if the election had been held then, Obama would have probably lost.

Benenson, who is fifty-six, is bearded and volatile. He speaks with a New York accent, and in the movie version of the Obama campaign he might be played by Richard Lewis. He is considered the star pollster in the Democratic Party. Like several of Obama's other top advisers—David Axelrod; Rahm Emanuel, the Illinois congressman who is his new chief of staff; Bill Burton, the campaign's national press secretary—Benenson was deeply involved in helping Democrats win in the 2006 midterm elections, an experience that put the Obama team more in touch with the mood of the electorate going into 2008. (The top strategists for Clinton and McCain had not been involved in difficult races in 2006.)

The data from Benenson's June presentation contained some reasons to be optimistic. The conventional wisdom was that Obama, as the newest of the candidates, had an image that was malleable and thus highly vulnerable to negative attacks. But that was not what the polling showed. As the presentation explained, "Obama's image is considerably better defined than McCain's, even on attributes at the core of McCain's reputation," such as "stands up to lobbyists and special interests," "puts partisan politics aside to get things done," and "tells people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear."

For Obama aides, who viewed McCain as the one Republican with the potential to steal the anti-Washington bona fides of their candidate, Benenson's polling was revelatory. "Voters actually did not know as much as I think the press corps thought they did about John McCain," Anita Dunn, a senior adviser to Obama, told me. "What they'd heard about McCain most recently, and certainly during the primary process, was that he was like every other Republican—fighting to sound more like George Bush." Benenson said, "What we knew at the start of the campaign was that the notion of John McCain as a change agent and independent voice didn't exist anywhere outside the Beltway."

Another finding from this initial poll had clear strategic implications: the economy concerned the U.F.G.s more than any other issue, and on that question neither candidate showed particular strength. In addition, the U.F.G.s were fed up with Washington and, especially, with George W. Bush. Based on those insights, Benenson came up with some recommendations, among them "Own the economy" and "Maintain an emphasis on changing Washington."

As a practical matter, this meant that, after the Democratic National Convention, in Denver, the campaign would do all that it could to focus attention on economic matters. It had no

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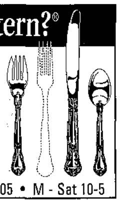

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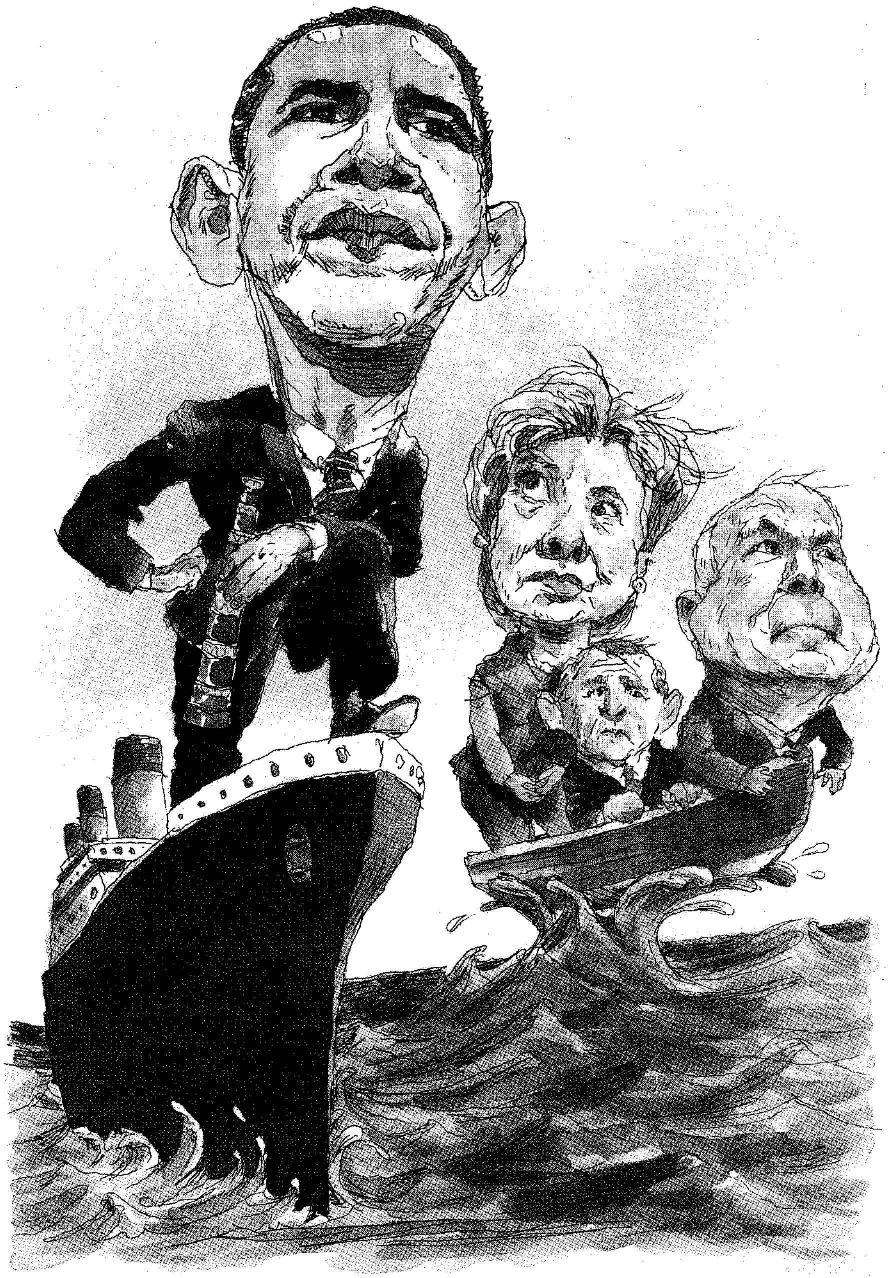
idea, of course, how fully both the economy and John McCain would coöperate with that goal.

There was an almost obsessive singularity in the way that Obama and his chief strategists—Axelrod and David Plouffe, the campaign's manager—saw the contest. In their tactical view, all that was wrong with the United States could be summarized in one word: Bush. The clear alternative, then, was not so much a Democrat or a liberal as it was *anyone* who could credibly define himself as "not Bush." Axelrod had a phrase that he often used to describe this approach: America was looking for "the remedy, not the replica." The appeal of the strategy was that, with only minor alterations, it could work in the primaries as well as in the general election, and that, in turn, allowed Obama to finesse the perpetual problem of Presidential politics: having one message to win over a party's most ardent supporters and another when trying to capture independents and U.F.G.s—the voters who decide a general election. Experience? That was George W. Bush. Hillary Clinton? She could be portrayed as polarizing and as a Washington insider—just like Bush. When Obama gave economic speeches during the primaries and caucuses—which continued over five months, in fifty-five states and territories—he lumped together the Clinton and Bush years as one long period of decline. And John McCain? Four more years of Bush, of "the same."

"We were fortunate," Anita Dunn said. Both Clinton and McCain were "Washington insiders, people who for different reasons you could argue weren't going to bring change."

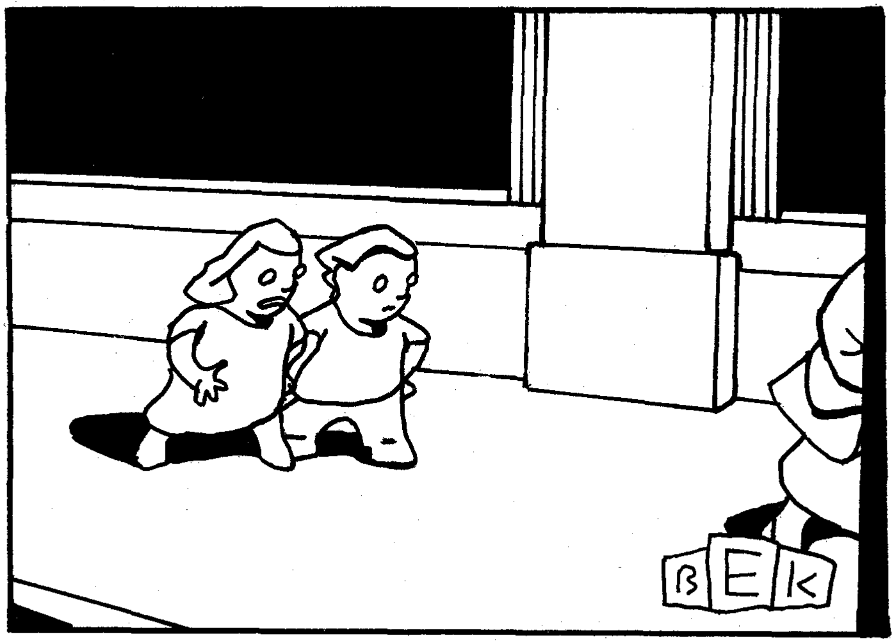
The incessant repetition of Obama's change message had its drawbacks, though, and Benenson described to me the ongoing debate inside and outside the campaign about whether the candidate should move away from that theme—for instance, during the summer and fall of 2007, when Obama's poll numbers in Iowa were stagnant. "We had people in Iowa in the summer of '07 saying, 'All we're getting asked about is experience! We've got to have an answer on experience!'" Benenson recalled.


Obama's strategy worked, with only minor alterations, throughout the campaign.

JOHN CUNEO

Polling in the summer and fall of 2007 led the campaign to a choice between trying to win the debate that the Clinton campaign was eager to have—about Obama's perceived lack of experience—and sharpening the debate about change in a way that could undermine Clinton. Once again, change trumped experience. "The much shorter path for us," Benenson said, going into the jargon of political consulting, "was to eliminate Senator Clinton from the decision set as a change agent. We defined change in a way that Barack Obama had to be the answer." Larry Grisolano, whose job was to oversee all spending on TV ads and mail, the largest part of the campaign's budget, posed the question this way: "How do we talk about change in a way that makes Hillary Clinton pay a price for her experience?"

On October 10, 2007, less than three months before the Iowa caucuses, Axelrod, Grisolano, Benenson, and other members of Obama's "message team" distilled several weeks' worth of polling and internal debate into a twelve-page memo that laid out Obama's strategy for the weeks leading up to the Iowa caucuses. "The fundamental idea behind this race from the start has been that this is a 'change' election, and that has proven out," the memo said. "Everything in our most recent research has confirmed this premise, as has the fact that other cam-



"This weekend I'm going to finally go through that closet and get rid of all those monsters."

• •

paigns have adapted to try and catch—or survive—the wave." The plan adopted by Obama was to raise character issues about Clinton that would disqualify her from employing Obama's message. "We cannot let Clinton especially blur the lines on who is the genuine agent of change in this election," the memo said. It argued that, in voters' minds, Clinton "embodies trench warfare vs. Republicans, and is consumed with beating them rather than unifying the country," and that "she prides herself on working the system, not changing it." Obama raised all these issues with some delicacy; he framed the choice as "calculation" versus "conviction," and was careful not to use Clinton's name. But the campaign wanted to be sure that reporters got the message. "We also can't drive the contrasts so subtly or obtusely that the press doesn't write about them and the voters don't understand that we're talking about HRC," the memo advised Obama.

The new strategy was unveiled on November 10th, at the annual Jefferson Jackson Dinner, the biggest event of the Iowa-caucus season. Candidates could not use notes or a teleprompter at the dinner, and, in the weeks leading up to it, Obama stayed up late each night memorizing a new speech based on the strategy memo. "The Iowa Jefferson Jackson Dinner ended up being a tipping point in the election," Dan Pfeiffer, Obama's communications director, said. "That's when we took the lead in our internal polling in Iowa for the first time."

Axelrod believed that the argument about change versus experience would also apply in a race against McCain, and he laid out his argument to Obama in a strategy memo in late 2006, when Obama was still planning his Presidential race. "I was assessing potential opponents," Axelrod told me. "I got to McCain and said that the McCain of 2000 would be a formidable opponent in a year that was all about change, but that he would almost certainly have to make a series of Faustian bargains in order to be the nominee, and that would make him ultimately a very vulnerable candidate in a year when people were looking for change. And so we started the general election, and by then he had made the Faustian bargains, and he had turned himself into a Bush supporter." Axelrod continued, "So we had a very simple premise about the general election, which is that these Bush policies had failed, that McCain was essentially carrying the tattered banner of a failed Administration, and that we represented a change from all that. There have been zigs and zags in the road, but that's essentially the strategy that we have executed from the start."

The campaign's faith in the strength of such a simple message was constant. Not only was it the answer for an electorate exhausted with Bush; it turned Obama's vulnerabilities into assets. "He was at that point a couple of years out of the Illinois Senate, and he was a black guy named Barack Hussein Obama," Axelrod said. "You don't have to load up the wagon with too many more bricks than that. But, in a year that was poised for big change, those things were less of an obstacle than you might find in a traditional year. As is often the case, your strength is your weakness, and your weakness is your strength." Obama almost never delivered a speech from a lectern unless it was festooned with the word "change." On Election Day, thirty-four per cent of the voters said that they were looking for change, and nearly ninety per cent of those voters chose Obama.

Like many campaign teams, Obama's was young. The communications department—made up mostly of guys in their twenties and thirties—had a fraternity-house quality. On weekends, they would often drink beer together and play the video game Rock Band at a group house in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. They had been brought up in Democratic politics in the previous two decades with an understanding that the people who worked for Bill and Hillary Clinton were the best operatives in Washington, especially when it came to dealing with the media. They had watched "The War Room," the documentary about the 1992 Clinton campaign, which featured strategists like James Carville and George Stephanopoulos manically responding to every negative story and trying to win every news cycle.

Several Obama aides believe that a crucial moment came after a debate sponsored by YouTube and CNN in July of 2007. During the debate, Obama was asked, "Would you be

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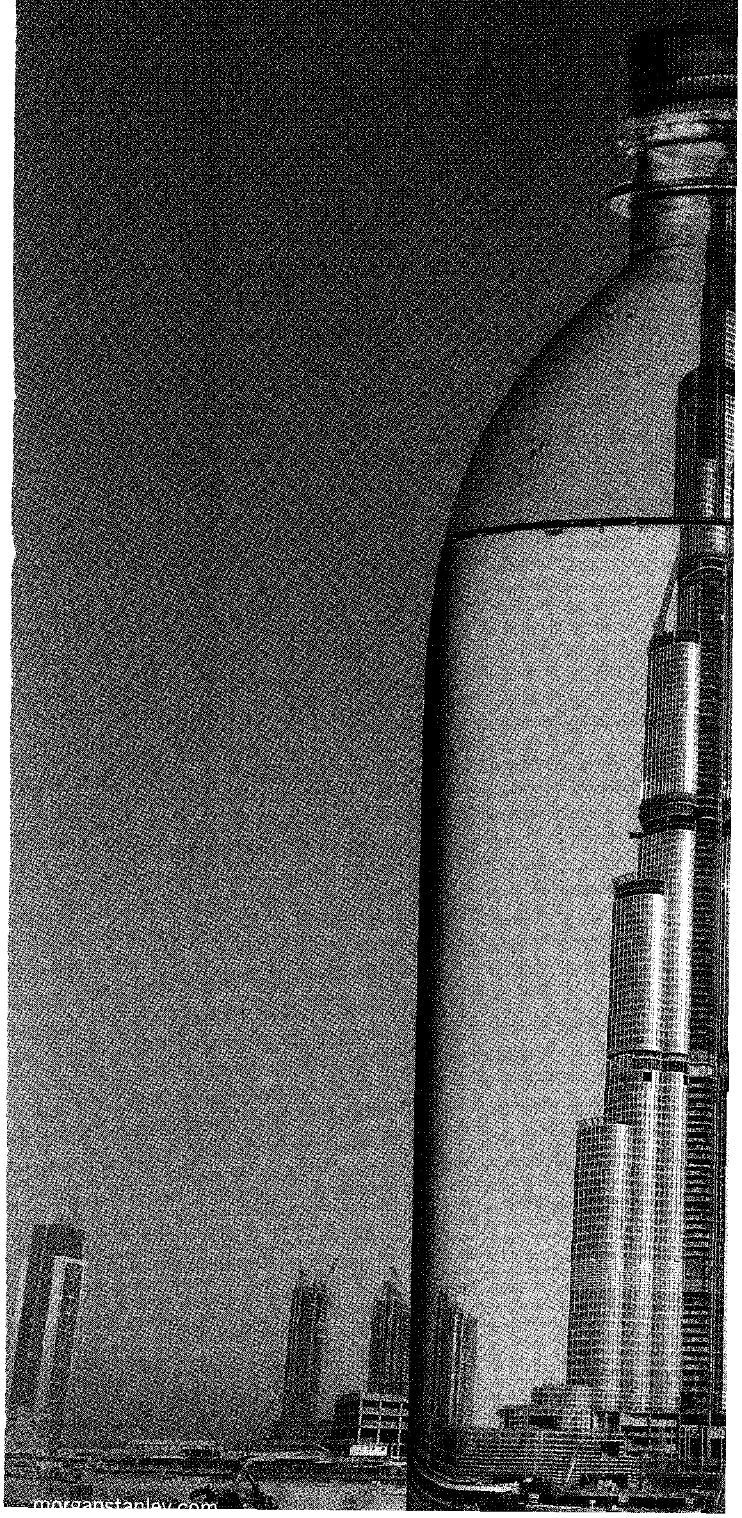

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willing to meet separately, without preconditions, during the first year of your Administration, in Washington or anywhere else, with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea, in order to bridge the gap that divides our countries?" Obama answered simply, "I would." Hillary Clinton pounced on the remark as hopelessly naïve, and her aides prepared to emphasize what appeared to be a winning argument. Obama's aides had much the same reaction. "We know this is going to be the issue of the day," Dan Pfeiffer, recalling a conference call the following morning, said. "We have the sense they're going to come after us on it. And we're all on the bus trying to figure out how to get out of it, how not to talk about it." Obama, who was listening to part of the conversation, took the telephone from an aide and instructed his staff not to back down. According to an aide, Obama said something to the effect of "This is ridiculous. We met with Stalin. We met with Mao. The idea that we can't meet with Ahmadinejad is ridiculous. This is a bunch of Washington-insider conventional wisdom that makes no sense. We should not run from this debate. We should have it."

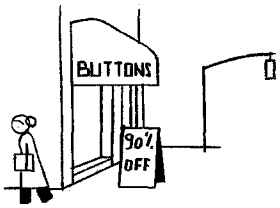
The episode gave Obama's communications aides a boost of confidence. "Instead of writing a memo explaining away our position to reporters, we changed our memo and wrote an aggressive defense of our position and went on the offense," Pfeiffer said. The aftermath taught them that they could take on the dreaded Clinton machine—"the most impressive, toughest, most ruthless war room in the world," as Pfeiffer put it. "It was like we had taken our first punch and kept on going," he said.

The anti-Washington message of their candidate started to influence the way that some staffers saw themselves. "We are, I think, as a group, different from folks in Washington in that we signed up for this campaign and moved to Chicago not knowing a clear path to victory," Bill Burton, Obama's press secretary, said. "But, at the same time, we are all still creatures of Washington in the sense that when something happens like that"—the back-and-forth at the YouTube debate—"it lends itself to us thinking, Well, maybe that's something that we clarify, because the grownups in Washington were all saying you can't do that. And those are the people that we came up listening to. The Clinton Administration people were saying, 'O.K., kids, you can't do that.'"

Campaigns are divided in two. On one side are the admakers, speechwriters, press secretaries, and assorted spinners, who manage a candidate's image. On the other side are the field operatives, who find voters and deliver them to the polls. While the communications people operate almost exclusively in the world of perceptions, the field people operate in the world of hard data. David Plouffe, the Obama campaign's publicity-shy manager, whom Obama praised as "the unsung hero" of his campaign in his victory speech last Tuesday night, comes out of the field side of campaigns. "Politics is about numbers," Plouffe said to me a few days before the election.

Plouffe, who is forty-one, is thin and discreet, and his low profile in the press sent a message throughout the Obama organization that staffers were to be similarly reticent about attracting publicity. The catchphrase inside the campaign was "No drama with Obama," and Plouffe channelled the low-key temperament of the candidate himself. "Barack went out and sought people who had a certain personality type," Pfeiffer said. "They were people who had intentionally low profiles in Washington." Of Plouffe, Pfeiffer said, "If he had wanted to spend the past five years of his life on 'Crossfire' and CNN, he could do that. He's chosen not to do that." When, in January, 2007, Pfeiffer interviewed for his job, Obama told him, "What I want around me are people who are calm, who don't get too high and don't get too low, because that's how I am."

Jon Favreau, a twenty-seven-year-old speechwriter who had worked for John Kerry in 2004, told me, "People were drawn to him and inspired by him in a way that you knew this was about electing Barack Obama. People had come from places where they were probably disappointed in politics. I was, after 2004. It was painful, and I didn't know if I was going to do it again." He added, "Even during tough times, everyone sticks together. There are not a lot of Washington assholes on this campaign."



Alyssa Mastromonaco, the director of scheduling and advance, who had also worked for Kerry in 2004, said that she had some trouble getting used to the quieter vibe of the Obama operation. "When I first started on the campaign, at the very beginning of this one, I was one of the only people who had actually done a Presidential before," Mastromonaco, who is thirty-two, told me. "And so we were on some conference call, and I was just completely irritated by something someone was saying. After the call, they came in and were, like, 'Alyssa, this is a campaign where you need to respect other people's opinions and you can't be a bitch.' I was, like, 'Oh, my God, these guys are serious!'"

Obama, who is not without an ego, regarded himself as just as gifted as his top strategists in the art and practice of politics. Patrick Gaspard, the campaign's political director, said that when, in early 2007, he interviewed for a job with Obama and Plouffe, Obama said that he liked being surrounded by people who expressed strong opinions, but he also said, "I think that I'm a better speechwriter than my speechwriters. I know more about policies on any particular issue than my policy directors. And I'll tell you right now that I'm gonna think I'm a better political director than my political director." After Obama's first debate with McCain, on September 26th, Gaspard sent him an e-mail. "You are more clutch than Michael Jordan," he wrote. Obama replied, "Just give me the ball." Obama's confidence filtered down through the campaign and gave comfort to his staff during the bleaker moments of 2008, such as when Obama learned that he had lost the New Hampshire primary. After that, he told his longtime friend and adviser Valerie Jarrett, "This will turn out to have been a good thing."

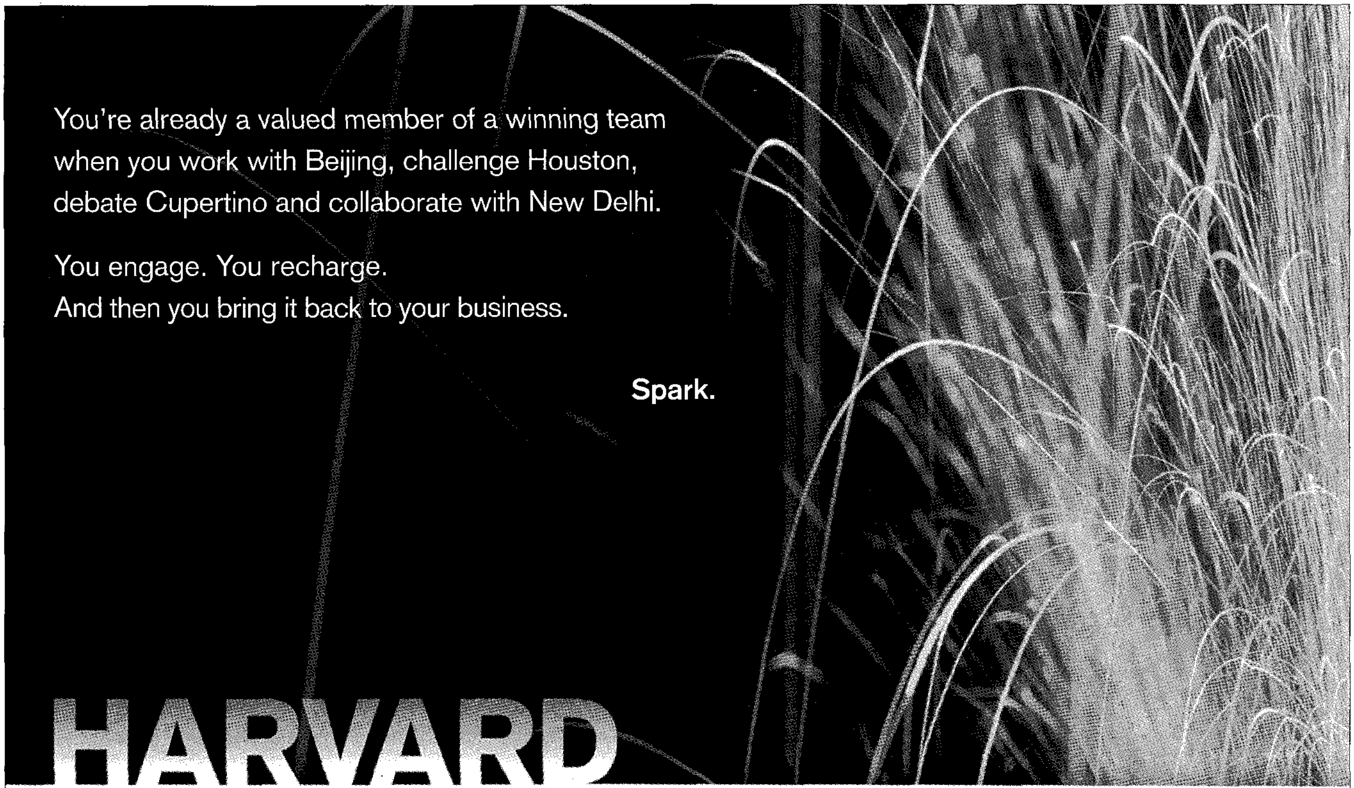
Jarrett told me, "You would think you would have a lot of other things to say before you might get to that." Favreau said, "His demeanor when he won the Iowa caucuses and his demeanor when he lost New Hampshire were not much different."

David Plouffe's field director was Jon Carson. When we spoke, five days before the election, it was at a cafeteria-style Italian restaurant in the food court of the office building that housed Obama's headquarters. He wore a gray button-down shirt and khakis, and told me that we had exactly forty-five minutes. Carson has a civil-engineering degree and spent time in Honduras working as a water and sanitation engineer. He, like Plouffe, made me think of the focussed men in white shirts and narrow black ties who, in the nineteen-sixties, ran the space program. When Carson hired field organizers for the campaign, he said that he looked for people with unusual backgrounds—"I try to throw out all the political-science majors when I do hiring." During a lull in the primary season, he set up a three-week "data camp" in Oregon for Obama staffers. "We had the best data operation of any campaign," he said. "You can have the most inspirational candidate, you can have the best organizing philosophy in the world, but if you can't organize your data to take advantage of it and get lists in front of the canvassers and take these volunteers and use it in a smart way and figure out who it is we're going to talk to—I mean, the rest of it is all pointless."

Carson was part of the team that made the important decision, during the race against Clinton, to target small caucus states where Clinton had virtually no presence. Carson and Plouffe realized that the cost-per-delegate in caucus states was very low. "I remember the day when we said, 'Look at this, we could win more delegates in Idaho than in New Jersey,'" he told me. Obama's original plan was to win the Iowa caucuses and use momentum from that victory to catapult him through the three other early states—New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina—and then on to February 5th, Super Tuesday, when twenty-four states voted. It was clear that the campaign would need a backup plan if Clinton and Obama split the first four states, which is what happened. Obama won Iowa and South Carolina, and Clinton won New Hampshire and Nevada.

As the campaign got ready for Super Tuesday, Carson called upon the volunteers—in particular, those he called the "super-volunteers," people who had left their jobs or dropped out of school to help. He estimated that there were about fifteen thousand super-volunteers working full time for Obama. Carson recalled the moment when the campaign figured out what it would cost to put a hundred organizers out in the February 5th states. "It was the first time that we took an enormous leap of faith in our grass-roots network that was already out there," he said.

On October 1st, a field organizer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named Joey Bristol, a recent graduate of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, who had delayed a career at the State Department and was working as an intern at the Chicago campaign headquarters, was sent to Idaho to organize the state for Obama. When he arrived, he learned that much of his work had already been done by a local group, Idaho for Obama. "When Joey gets there, a hundred people are waiting for him," Carson said. "They've got meetings planned for him for the next month, they've got little subgroups by county all across the state, they've already gone to the state Party, gotten the rules of the caucus, figured out a plan." On February 5th, Clinton won a net total of eleven delegates from New Jersey, which had a primary, and Obama won a net total of twelve delegates from the caucus state of Idaho.

In hindsight, it seems that the most important decision that Obama made during the campaign was to remove himself from the restrictions of the public-financing system. The decision held risks. He had, after all, promised to stay in the system, and his reversal had the potential to damage the reform image that Benenson's polling showed was a vital advantage over McCain. But there were collateral benefits; namely, making the campaign more of a person-to-person enterprise, by keeping it tied to the Internet grass roots. Much of the intimacy that the campaign created with its supporters was driven by its need—its ravenous appetite—for money. Plouffe, who rarely spoke to reporters on the record, communicated with donors via amateurish videos in which he explained campaign strategy. "You can't just ask for money," Jim Messina, Obama's chief of staff, said. "You've got to involve them. That's why the famous videos with Plouffe were so important. People felt like insiders. They felt like they knew what we were doing."

Some Obama advisers couldn't quite believe that McCain decided not to follow them in opting out of the system. McCain, during the campaign, criticized Obama for going back on his pledge, but the issue did not seem to hurt Obama. The financial gap between the two campaigns was striking. Budgets that were drawn up in June at Obama headquarters were discarded in September, after the Conventions, when online fund-raising soared. "I spend the money, so everything's gotta go through me to get spent, which is the best job ever," Messina, the keeper of the budget, told me. "It's like getting the keys to a fucking Ferrari." Messina's Ferrari got more turbocharged every week. "On my whiteboard in front of me, I have the money we added to the media and field budgets by day," he said. "We ended up adding tens of millions to the media budget and twenty-five million to the mail budget over the course of September and the first week of October." By the end of September, Messina said, the money for Obama "was just raining down." Though McCain was aided by outside groups and by the Republican National Committee, his entire budget for the general election was the amount provided by the government—eighty-four million dollars.

One day in September, Plouffe asked Messina if he could find seven million dollars more in the budget—for a thirty-minute advertorial that was to air on the Wednesday before Election Day. He found it. (The Obama commercial attracted an estimated thirty-three million viewers, nearly twice the number for the top-rated "Dancing with the Stars.") There was still money left over, so the campaign bought ads in video games, like Guitar Hero and Madden NFL 09, and scheduled some get-out-the-vote concerts aimed at the youth vote and featuring the rapper Jay-Z and the N.B.A. star LeBron James. "I mean, dude," Messina said, "when you're buying commercials in video games, you truly are being well funded."

But television remained the key advertising medium. And the volume of TV ads that Obama was broadcasting in late October was unprecedented in a Presidential campaign. "In a battleground state like Virginia, we're at thirty-five hundred points," Messina said, by which he meant that an average viewer sees a spot thirty-five times a week. "I've worked on two of the closest U.S. Senate races in the country," he continued. "I helped do Jon Tester last time in Montana," he said, adding that, at the end of the Tester campaign, an average viewer was seeing pro-Tester spots twenty times a week. For Obama, he said, "we've been at two thousand points in Montana since the end of September." Obama narrowly lost the state, but Republicans were forced to use resources to defend it.

McCain couldn't keep up. "From the second week in September to the middle of October, we were doing two or three to one against McCain, and at least three to one in some of these battleground states," Messina said. "Republicans couldn't play in North Carolina. They couldn't play in Indiana. They weren't in Florida for forever, and so we're up by ourselves just kicking the shit out of them." Obama won all three states.

The Obama campaign became so flush with cash that one of its trickiest political problems was dealing with other Democrats who wanted Obama to campaign for them and spend money on their races. Pete Rouse, who was Obama's Senate chief of staff and an architect of his Presidential campaign, spent hours handling such calls. "When we announced that we raised a hundred and fifty-one million in one month"—in October—"every Democratic senator in America called Rouse and had an idea how to spend it on winning the Senate, or whatever race," one senior Obama aide said. Senator Charles Schumer, who ran the committee in charge of Democratic senatorial campaigns, was particularly aggressive. "The only Senate ad Obama did was in Oregon," the aide continued. "Schumer rolled Barack. He just got him at an event and made him promise. Barack is really good about not making those promises, but Schumer was begging for money."

Like being too rich, seeming to be too popular—as exemplified by the enormous crowds that Obama attracted—also vexed the campaign. "We had a rally problem during the primaries," Anita Dunn said. "It was like he was on a pedestal." As far back as the earliest primaries, the campaign went back and forth between embracing the crowds to show off Obama's mass appeal and shunning them to emphasize his regular-guy credentials. Hillary Clinton's campaign discovered that it could make

Obama's popularity work against him. "Once the Clinton campaign figured out how it wanted to run against Obama, she started doing these town halls," Dunn said. "Her visuals were she was with people, she was working her heart out, and he's floating into these rallies with all these adoring people."

"I love hanging out in my favorite chair."

McCain's aides adopted the same strategy in the general election. In July, after Obama toured the Middle East and Europe, and spoke in Berlin at a rally where two hundred thousand people came to cheer him, a McCain ad compared Obama to Paris Hilton. What seemed to outsiders like a trivial, even ridiculous attack had an enormous impact inside Obama's headquarters.

"We've had a 'presumptuous watch' on since then," Dunn said. Alyssa Mastromonaco, who was in charge of putting on all of Obama's events, said, "After that, people started thinking that he's like this celebutante. You have to make it pretty clear through your pictures every day that you aren't, that this is not easy for you."

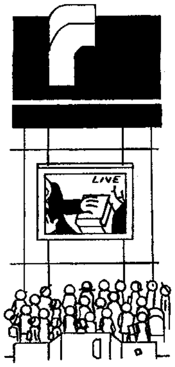
The campaign kept Obama away from celebrities as much as possible. A Hollywood fund-raiser with Barbra Streisand became a source of deep anxiety and torturous discussions. The campaign was on the phone for days trying to make sure it was going to work, and almost cancelled it. In Denver, celebrities who in past Presidential campaigns would have had major speaking roles were shielded from public view. "We spent hours trying to celebrity-down the Democratic National Convention," the aide said.

Two days before Obama's acceptance speech, in Denver, Jim Margolis, a top media consultant to the campaign, went to inspect the stage at Invesco Field. McCain's aides had successfully turned the Greek columns ringing the stage at the stadium into a story about how a godlike Obama would be speaking from a "temple." But when Margolis arrived he realized that it was even worse than that. "I walked in and turned to look at the stage, and they had put in purple runway lights all the way around the whole stage, *up across all the columns and it* looked like a set from 'Deal or No Deal,'" he said. "And in back of them, where he would walk out, there was a colored horseshoe that was lit that would have gone around him. And in back of that was a sixty-five-inch plasma monitor that would change colors. And for a guy who is being torpedoed every day about celebrity and Hollywood this was straight out of a Hollywood set. My mouth just dropped open." Margolis ordered the producer and the set designer, who had worked for months on the design, to remove the screen and the purple lights and generally make the stage look less like a Hollywood production.

Obama's rallies had a strategic purpose beyond their visual impact, and, by putting pressure on Obama to scale down these events, Clinton and then McCain were able to take away one of the campaign's most useful organizational tools—a chance to capture personal information about potential voters and campaign volunteers, and, toward the end, a means of encouraging supporters to vote early. The battle between the communications staff, which was spooked by the Paris Hilton ad, and the field organizers, who needed the rallies to help identify Obama voters, was decided in favor of the organizers. "Finally, at the end of September we got back to saying, 'Look, we're gonna do this again because we need to push early voting,' and if you're gonna push early voting and voter registration you've gotta do big events," Messina said.

In the closing weeks of the campaign, crowds of fifty, sixty, and seventy thousand people greeted Obama at every stop—almost as if there were a pent-up demand to see him. At Obama's final rally, in Manassas, Virginia, the night before Election Day, ninety thousand people came to a dusty fairground. Traffic was snarled for miles on the main highway leading to the site, and people simply abandoned their cars on the side of the road so as not to miss Obama's speech. Obama's grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, had died that morning. He seemed subdued, and when he finished his speech he did something unusual. He stood on the stage for what seemed like a long time, a solitary figure in a simple black jacket with his arms at his sides, as if simply absorbing the intensity of a crowd illuminated by high-powered spotlights. A man standing next to me pointed up at Obama. “Look,” he said. “He doesn’t want it to end.”

Much of the Obama campaign was consumed with making the candidate look Presidential. The theory was that the U.F.G.s wanted to be for Obama, but needed some help visualizing him as Commander-in-Chief. His aides had a term for the process of getting voters comfortable with a President Obama: “building a permission structure.” Bill Burton explained it this way: “There were a lot of questions about Senator Obama from the start. Who is he? What’s with the name? Is America ready to vote for a black guy for President?” There were four major moments in the general election—Obama’s trip to the Middle East and Europe, his selection of a running mate, his Convention speech, and the debates—and each was designed to add another plank to the permission structure. For instance, the foreign trip was designed to show Obama in meetings with world leaders, the strategy that the McCain campaign employed when it sent Sarah Palin to the United Nations to meet people like Henry Kissinger and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan. “If he looks like a President, and you put him in Presidential settings, then people will get more comfortable with the idea that he could be President,” Anita Dunn said.



To Obama’s aides, the most important moment of the campaign occurred when Obama had to actually *be* President. It was not totally obvious how he would perform. Many who cheered for Obama from the moment he gave the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention have had reservations. Michelle Obama once talked to me about the doubts that would need to be addressed before people could vote for her husband. “It is a leap of faith,” she said finally. “We talk about it all the time. It is a leap of faith.”

No matter how much confidence one has in Obama, support for him is often based on such intangibles as his temperament and his intelligence, not on a real record of successful decision-making. The campaign helped affirm supporters’ faith in him, but running a successful campaign can’t predict whether someone will be a good President; after all, most Presidents, whether good or bad, have won a Presidential race.

The September financial crisis, which confronted Congress with the task of trying to rescue the economy from collapse, gave Obama’s aides the clearest indication that he might indeed be as good at governing as he has been at campaigning. It forced Obama to do something unusual and difficult for a candidate: he needed to separate politics and governance in the midst of a political campaign in which there was often no distinction. Obama’s aides say that that was the moment they won the election—the moment that any lingering doubts were erased.

The Obama campaign was organized around a series of conference calls, the most important of which was a nightly call involving Obama and some dozen senior advisers. There was always a mixture of the serious and the absurd. For instance, on October 10th the agenda included an update on the message for rallies in Philadelphia, an update on the collapsing economy, and, just as important then, an “Ayers update”—how to respond to attacks on Obama’s limited contacts with the former Weatherman William Ayers. On these calls, Obama’s advisers had a chance to watch their candidate grapple with complex economic problems. During one, Obama laid out the steps in negotiating the bailout package: he would call the Treasury Secretary, Henry Paulson, and the Federal Reserve chairman, Ben Bernanke, and consult with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Pfeiffer said, “We all got off the phone and I was, like, ‘You know what? That was the first call that felt like that’s what it’s going to be like if he’s President.’ That was the moment where he began looking like a President and *not a Presidential candidate.*”

Ever since the Benenson PowerPoint presentation in June, Obama’s aides had been looking for ways to show that McCain was just another Washington politician; this was the strategy that had helped defeat Hillary Clinton. At the start of the financial crisis, when McCain announced that he would “suspend” his campaign, Obama’s team knew that McCain had stumbled—and that it could highlight his mistake. “We tested right away as to whether people thought it was a genuine attempt to solve the crisis or more of a political maneuver,” Benenson said. “The numbers started out as even, maybe a two-point edge on ‘genuine intent,’ but, five days later, it swung against him, with a ten-point deficit toward ‘political maneuver.’” Obama was surprised by McCain’s move. Earlier that day, September 24th, he had spoken with McCain and asked him to release a joint statement about principles that both men wanted to see in a financial rescue package. McCain seemed interested but also told Obama about possibly suspending his campaign; he asked Obama to join him. Obama was noncommittal, but he ended the conversation with the belief that they had agreed about the joint statement and called Jason Furman, a top economic adviser.

“I picked up the phone, and he basically said, ‘Jason, I just got off the phone with Senator McCain and we’re going to come out with a joint statement to help move the financial rescue package forward, because it looks like it’s in a lot of trouble,’ ” Furman told me. “ ‘I know you know his economic adviser, and I’d like you to call him up and make it a really substantive statement.’ ” Furman, glancing at a television, saw McCain walking up to a lectern; a caption at the bottom of the screen said that he was suspending his campaign and might not attend the first debate. When Furman told Obama what McCain was doing, Obama used a salty expression to describe the move and hung up the phone.

As the financial crisis dragged on, Obama and his aides began to realize what it meant for their prospects. Staffers eagerly soaked up the latest polling, which showed a growing lead for Obama, and the conference calls at *night only increased their confidence in* the candidate. There was some pressure on Obama to come out against the rescue bill, a position that would have been more consistent with the campaign’s themes. “On a purely political calculation, it would have been easy to be against that bill,” Anita Dunn said. “If you look at all the polls, right? People were thinking, They made a mess and they're trying to stick you, and they're going to bail out Wall Street. I mean, what would have been easier?"

David Axelrod, who has known Obama longer than most of Obama's other campaign aides, said that he had always wondered how Obama would fare at such a moment. "Barbaric and sometimes ridiculous as is this process of running for President, the thing that I love about it is at the end of the day you can't hide who you are," Axelrod said. "I'd known him for sixteen years, I have huge confidence in him, but you never know how someone's gonna handle the vagaries and vicissitudes of a Presidential race, so you hope that they do well."

A lingering question about Barack Obama's run for the Presidency was whether this inspirational figure—more so even than the candidate John F. Kennedy—would be transformed by consultants and a sophisticated campaign apparatus into someone no longer recognizable. "Most of us do this and then we go away," Dan Pfeiffer said at the end of a conversation at Obama's Chicago headquarters. "The first Wednesday in November, we're off doing something else. We got the horse to the water, and someone else can make him drink. We're about winning elections, not actually governing the country, and because he has not done campaigns—he has not run for reëlection five times; he's actually really only ever had one hard race, this one—he doesn't have all the bad habits of career politicians."

It is already being said by the great army of bloggers and commentators that the Obama campaign was the best-run in modern history. Much the same thing was said about James Carville's work for Bill Clinton in 1992 and Karl Rove's for Bush in 2000. But campaigns can change a candidate, too. Axelrod said to me that, early in the process, Obama told aides, "I'm in this to win, I want to win, and I think we will win. But I'm also going to emerge intact. I'm going to be Barack Obama and not some parody." At another point, in early 2007, Obama returned from a forum about health care knowing that he had not done well against Hillary Clinton. "She was very good, and I need to meet that standard, meet that test," he told Axelrod. "I am not a great candidate now, but I am going to figure out how to be a great candidate." One of Obama's achievements as a politician is that he somehow managed to emerge intact, after navigating two years of a modern and occasionally absurd Presidential race, while also becoming a great candidate. On Election Night, as he once again invoked the words of Lincoln, he seemed to be saying that he was going to figure out how to be a great President. ♦

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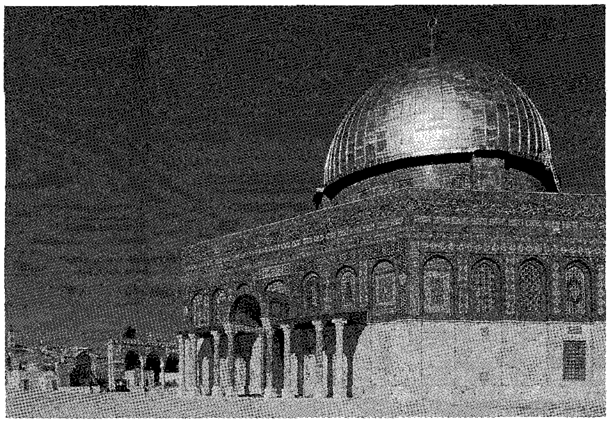

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THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

THE FALL

John McCain's choices.

BY DAVID GRANN

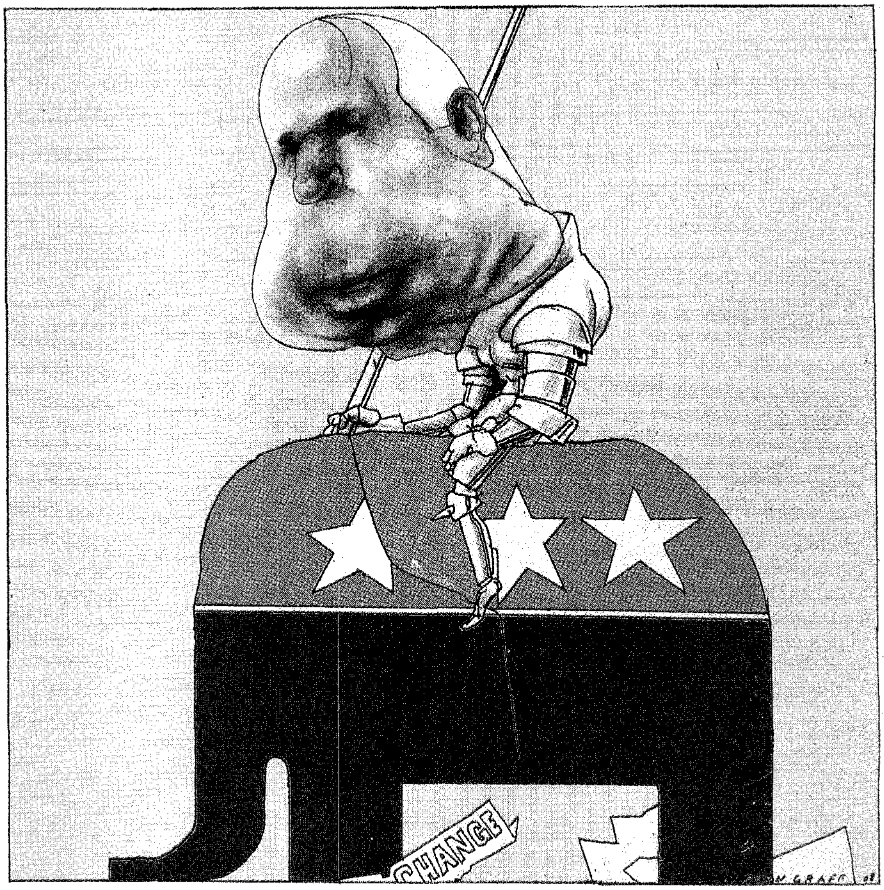
A defining moment of the "old" John McCain—as many Americans, even some of his friends, have begun to refer to him as he was before his run for the Presidency in 2008—took place in February, 2000, during his first bid for the White House, when he was challenging George W. Bush for the Republican nomination in the South Carolina primary. McCain had recently upset Bush in New Hampshire and was in a buoyant mood, vowing that, like "Luke Skywalker fighting the Death Star," he would not only defeat Bush but reform a party corrupted by "big money" and, as he later put it, "agents of intolerance."

Within days, sordid attacks began to appear: flyers on car windows claiming that McCain, who had adopted an orphan from Bangladesh, actually had fathered a black child; recorded phone messages, or robo-calls, spreading rumors that McCain's wife, Cindy, who had once been addicted to prescription painkillers, was a junkie; and lies, propagated by an obscure group of Vietnam veterans, suggesting that McCain had become a traitor while serving in Vietnam.

McCain's response was decisive: he pulled from television his negative advertisements, and announced to supporters, "If we don't prevail, my friends, we know that we have taken the honorable way." On the evening of the primary, McCain and his family watched the returns in a hotel suite in Charleston. As the polls came in, showing that he had lost by more than ten points, Cindy wept. "How could they believe all that about you?" she said of the public.

McCain, after embracing his wife and children, headed down to a ballroom to deliver his concession speech. "I will not take the low road to the highest office in this land," he said. "I want the Presidency in the best way—not the worst way. The American people deserve to be treated with respect by those who seek to lead the nation. And I promise you: you will have my respect until my last day on earth. The greatest blessing of my life was to have been born an American, and I will never . . . dishonor the nation I love or myself by letting ambition overcome principle. Never. Never. Never."

In the final weeks of the 2008 campaign, it became clear that John McCain might lose more than the Presidency. On October 6th, slipping steeply in the polls, he held a rally in Albuquerque. Rather than speak off the cuff, as he preferred, he kept his eyes on a teleprompter. During the 2000 race, McCain was known as the "happy warrior," but now his tone was harsh. Angrily waving a finger, McCain portrayed his Democratic opponent, Barack Obama, as a shadowy figure who never seemed to reveal his true identity. McCain noted that Obama's campaign recently had to "return thirty-three thousand dollars in illegal foreign funds from *Palestinian* donors." McCain urged the audience to wonder, "Who is the real Barack Obama?"



People liked McCain because they thought him more honorable than other politicians.

FINN GRAFF

Before he even finished the speech, he and his aides had begun their now notorious campaign—sometimes in public, sometimes sub rosa—to supply insinuating answers to this question. Ads appeared accusing Obama, who had served on the boards of two charities with William Ayers, a founder of the Weather Underground, of being allied with a "terrorist." Voters received flyers featuring a mug shot of Ayers and the words "Terrorist. Radical. Friend of Obama." Then came the same kind of robo-calls that had savaged McCain in 2000, and that he had once denounced as messages of "hate." McCain even hired one of the same firms that Bush used in 2000. The messages warned, among other things, that Obama had tried to stop doctors from caring "for babies born alive after surviving attempted abortions.” Meanwhile, McCain’s running mate, Sarah Palin, charged that Obama was “palling around with terrorists.” Other surrogates claimed that Obama was “anti-American,” a “guy of the street” who “used cocaine,” and had “friends that bombed the Pentagon.” According to *Newsweek*, Michelle Obama asked an aide, “Why would they try to make people hate us?”

Early on, McCain vowed that he wanted “the most positive kind of campaign.” But even though he sometimes seemed uncomfortable, shifting in his chair or looking away from the camera, he was at the heart of those personal attacks—demanding that Obama confess his relationship to a “washed-up terrorist,” and proclaiming that Obama would “lose a war in order to win a political campaign.”

As the rallies of McCain and Palin grew angrier—at the mention of Obama’s name, supporters yelled “Traitor!,” “Kill him!,” and “Off with his head!”—McCain seemed startled by what he had helped unleash. When, at one rally, a woman called Obama an untrustworthy “Arab,” McCain turned ashen and stammered, “No, Ma’am. He’s a decent family man.” Afterward, Ray LaHood, a Republican congressman from Illinois, who earlier had condemned the campaign’s inflammatory rhetoric, told me, “*That’s* the John McCain I know.”

Obama and his supporters decried McCain’s tactics. Yet some of the strongest criticism came from people whom McCain revered or who had long revered him. And it was not merely about strategy—the backbiting that always consumes losing campaigns. It was about the very nature of John McCain. In their eyes, at least, their hero was losing not only an election but his reputation—or, as one prominent backer put it, “his soul.”

William G. Milliken, a moderate three-term Republican governor of Michigan, was part of the unusual coalition that had made McCain an almost singular figure in American politics. Although for most of his career McCain’s voting record was consistently conservative, he was far more popular with centrist Republicans, independents, and many Democrats than he was with the Party’s base. His appeal was rooted less in ideology than in character: he presented himself as a figure who would never pander or betray his convictions. When he fell short of his principles, as in the 1989 Keating Five scandal—the Senate Ethics Committee found that he “exercised poor judgment” in helping a major donor—his willingness to lacerate himself in public only reinforced this impression for many.

Milliken, who served as governor from 1969 to 1983, had been a gunner in the Air Force during the Second World War, and he was amazed by the way McCain, after being shot down as a Navy pilot during the Vietnam War, had stoically endured more than five years in captivity. He was also impressed that McCain had challenged his own party by embracing campaign-finance reform. Though the two men disagreed on social issues, Milliken felt that McCain did not exploit such issues as “wedges” to divide the electorate. In 2000, McCain—in a move that, seemingly, no self-preserving Republican politician would make—took on two of the most powerful leaders of the Christian right, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. As McCain put it, “Neither party should be defined by pandering to the outer reaches of American politics.”

Many of McCain’s supporters were equally struck by his refusal to use his status as a war hero to impugn others’ patriotism, particularly in the case of David Ifshin, a student radical who, in 1970, travelled to Hanoi and delivered a scathing radio address against the Vietnam War. The North Vietnamese broadcast Ifshin’s words into the cells where McCain and other U.S. prisoners were being held. Sixteen years later, Ifshin met with McCain, who had once publicly criticized his actions, and apologized; McCain accepted the apology and later defended Ifshin on the Senate floor. Similarly, in 1994, McCain backed Bill Clinton’s efforts to normalize relations with Vietnam, offering cover to a President whom many conservatives had derided as a draft dodger. Clinton later called McCain “a great man.”

During the Michigan Republican primary in 2000, Milliken endorsed McCain, helping him carry the state. When McCain ran in 2008, Milliken again supported him in the state primary, even though McCain was up against Mitt Romney, whose father had been governor of Michigan in the nineteen-sixties; Milliken had served as his lieutenant governor. “I received criticism for not backing Mitt, but I thought McCain was the best

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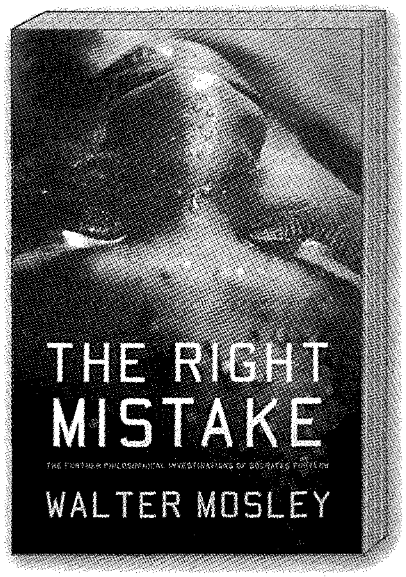

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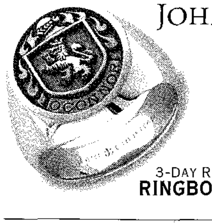

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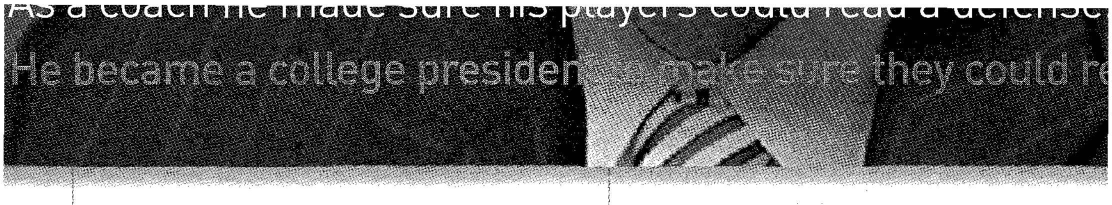
As a coach he made sure his players could read a defense
He became a college presiden to make sure they could re

"When I was head football coach of San Jose State, there was a spectacular athlete I wanted to recruit out of high school," says Fitzgerald Hill. "But I found out the kid couldn't read."

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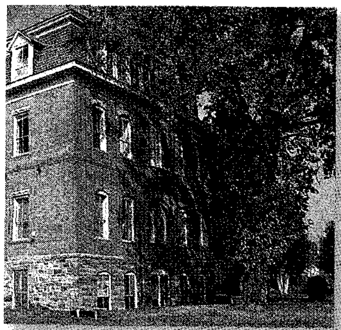

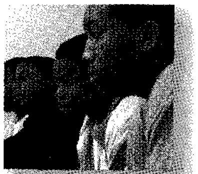

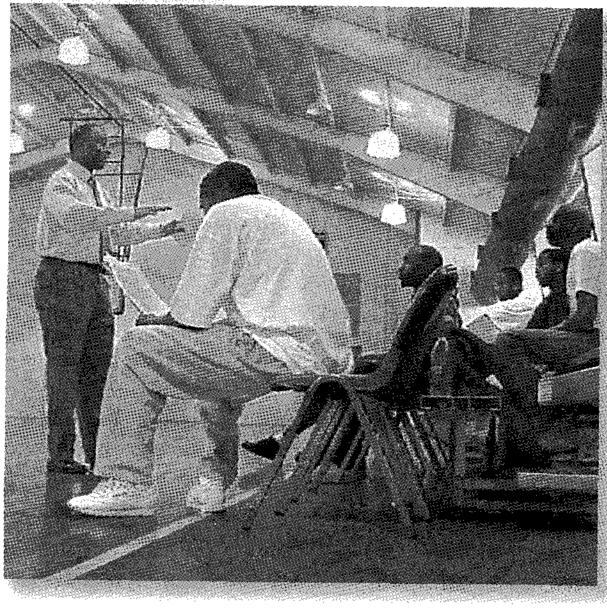

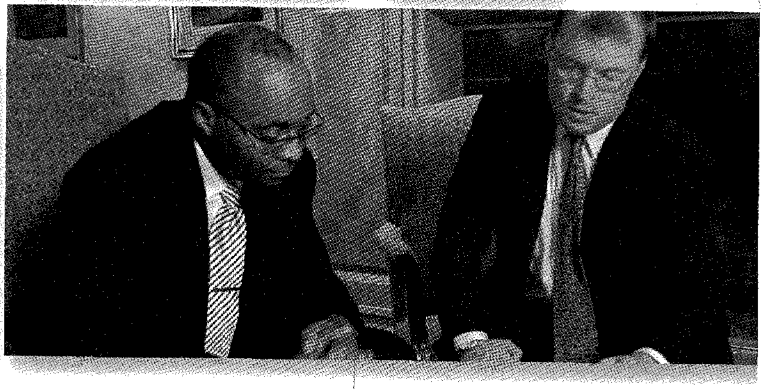

"When Fitz Hill came to us and asked, 'Can I do this?' we put together a view of all the family's assets and created a detailed budget based on their income, savings and expenses. Financial advice is not always about investment vehicles."

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person to be President," Milliken said.

Yet, last month, Milliken expressed disbelief that McCain, after experiencing "the most disgusting aspects of politics" in South Carolina, had adopted the same methods against Obama. He said, "McCain keeps asking, 'Who is the real Barack Obama?,' but what I want to know is who is the real John McCain?"

In 2000, some prominent Republicans came to McCain's defense, among them Frank Schaeffer, the son of Francis Schaeffer, an evangelist and anti-abortion crusader who is credited with helping to create the religious right. Schaeffer worked closely with his father, who died in 1984, but he felt that the movement had become extreme. In 2000, Schaeffer gave McCain his family's imprimatur, vouching for him on Christian radio shows. Six years later, Schaeffer, who had a son in the Marines, co-wrote a book, "AWOL," which spoke of the need for Americans to serve their country. McCain provided a blurb saying that the book illuminated "a more genuine and wiser patriotism."

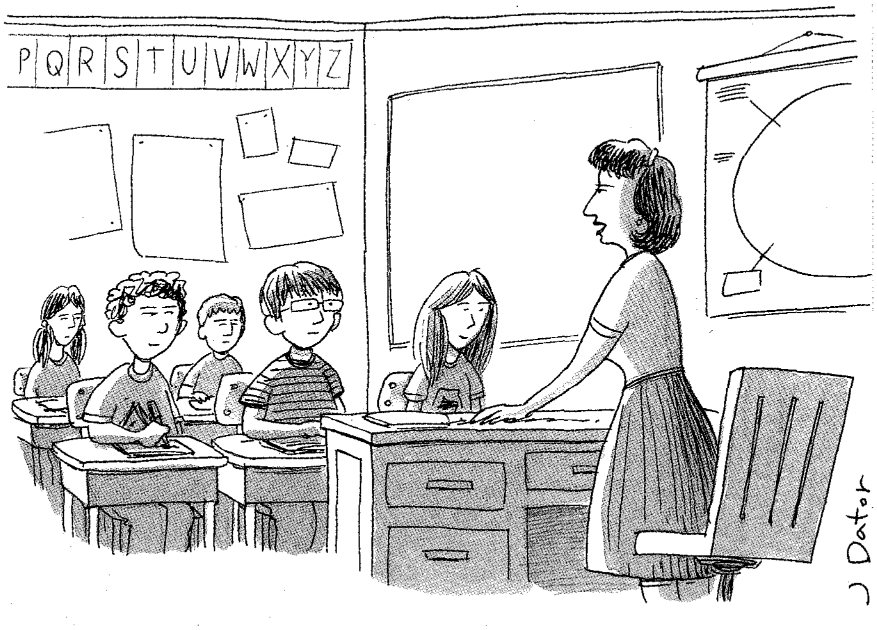
But, in October, Schaeffer, a lifelong Republican, wrote an open letter to McCain that said, "If your campaign does not stop equating Sen. Barack Obama with terrorism, questioning his patriotism and portraying Mr. Obama as 'not one of us,' I accuse you of deliberately feeding the most unhinged elements of our society the red meat of hate, and therefore of potentially instigating violence." He went on, "You are unleashing the monster of American hatred and prejudice, to the peril of all of us. You are doing this in wartime. You are doing this as our economy collapses. You are doing this in a country with a history of assassinations."

According to one of McCain's longtime friends, the endorsement of Obama by General Colin Powell was "especially painful," as there was no one whom McCain "admired more." Equally devastating were criticisms made by John Lewis, the civil-rights leader and Democratic congressman from Georgia, whom McCain had idolized. In the 2004 book "Why Courage Matters," which McCain wrote with his aide Mark Salter, a chapter was devoted to Lewis's march against racism in Selma, Alabama, during which he was beaten nearly to death. Because of the actions of Lewis and his colleagues, McCain wrote, many Americans were "ashamed that they had not loved their country as much as the marchers; that they had not the courage to march into the force of such injustice." McCain also praised Lewis for decrying incendiary black leaders, such as Louis Farrakhan, as "bigots." McCain concluded, "I've seen courage in action on many occasions. I can't say I've seen anyone possess more of it, and use it for any better purpose and to any greater effect, than John Lewis." A month before the election, Lewis released a blistering statement accusing McCain and Palin of "sowing the seeds of hatred and division." Though McCain publicly called the accusations "shocking and beyond the pale," a campaign aide told me that when McCain first heard Lewis's remarks he sat in silence inside the campaign's official bus.

Even members of McCain's inner circle expressed bewilderment and anger over his seeming transformation. One friend told me he thought that the man he had known for decades would never "take the low road to the highest office in this land." Near the end of the campaign, a perception had set in, among the press and some of McCain's former supporters, that the "old" John McCain was a fraud—a creation of consultants and a once fawning media. Reporters had often romanticized McCain and ignored evidence of his conservative ideology and his personal flaws—a fierce temper, impetuousness, and a tendency to demonize opponents. But the people who know McCain well, including many Democrats, believe—as the former Democratic Senator Tom Daschle put it—that McCain is a fundamentally "good man." The friend of McCain said, "I would take issue with anyone who says that he was a sham. He was the real deal." In this view, McCain's fall in 2008 has an almost mythic cast—it is the story of a great man who, overcome by what he himself once called the "disease" of Presidential ambition, sacrificed all. "I don't think he'll ever recover," another friend, who has been instrumental in his career, said. "My fear is that people who view the John McCain from the years '96 to '06 will think it was a political gimmick and what they've seen in the last five months is who he really is. If honor is your ideology, and you lose that, then what do you have left?"

After 2000, few politicians in America held greater moral stature than McCain. Though he remained unpopular with the right, his unusual coalition of supporters was rapidly growing. "I say to independents, Democrats, libertarians, vegetarians—come on over," he liked to say. His defeat in South Carolina had seemed to confirm his virtue, especially to Democrats who had long suffered at the hands of Republican operatives such as Lee Atwater.

His popularity was largely driven by a single belief: that he was more honorable than other politicians. Todd Harris, one of McCain's strategists in 2000, told me that he has never worked on a campaign more


P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
J Dator

"Today we'll be discussing the three branches of government—executainment, legislatainment, and judiciatainment."

closely focussed on a candidate's biography, and on that candidate's ability to project integrity. Accordingly, McCain's advisers let him speak to reporters for hours, unfiltered, on the Straight Talk Express. "It was a completely character-driven campaign," Harris said. "Other than the push for campaign-finance reform, many people would be hard pressed to recall any real policy initiatives that we campaigned on."

McCain's heroic reputation was centered on his experiences in Vietnam, but it had increased in Washington. Unlike most U.S. legislators—who spend hours a day picking over the minutiae of budget projections or health-care policy, and tending to the mundane needs of constituents—McCain waged gallant, and often futile, crusades against the corrupt and the powerful. He took on the tobacco industry and repeatedly lost, enhancing his stature in defeat. In the Senate, his signature concerns—including campaign-finance reform and opposition to secret "earmarks" for legislators' pet projects—were primarily ethical ones. Ivan Schlager, a former Democratic counsel to the Senate Commerce Committee, who worked with McCain during the nineties, recently told *Time*, of McCain's approach, "It's not ideological. It's good guys and bad guys."

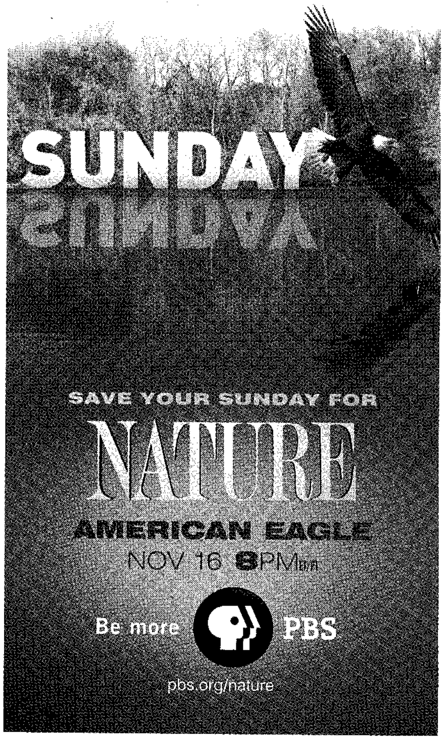
Starting in 1999, with the help of Mark Salter, McCain published a series of best-selling books that championed his character-based politics. In "Character Is Destiny," McCain said, "It is your character, and your character alone, that will make your life happy or unhappy." And in "Why Courage Matters" he wrote, "Without courage all virtue is fragile: admired, sought, professed, but held cheaply and surrendered without a fight. Courage is what Winston Churchill called 'the first of human qualities . . . because it guarantees all the others.' That's what we mean by the courage of our convictions."

McCain's view of politics as a moral quest, and his seeming frankness, endeared him to the press. In 1997, David Nyhan, a columnist for the Boston *Globe*, wrote, "For a lot of people, the Senate is ninety-nine bozos and this guy." Nyhan, who died in 2005, argued, "You cannot break McCain's will. You cannot make him quit. You cannot coerce him with threats." In 1996, Michael Lewis wrote in *The New Republic*, "I'm beginning to understand the war that must occur inside a fourteen-year-old boy who discovers he is more sexually attracted to boys than to girls. The longer I hang around McCain the harder it is to fight the feeling that just maybe I'm . . . Republican." A headline in *Esquire* declared, "John McCain Walks on Water."

McCain's efforts to construct a personal narrative around ethics and sacrifice were no doubt aimed at helping him secure the White House. But Bob Kerrey, the former Democratic senator from Nebraska and another Vietnam veteran, who is close to McCain, told me that the only way to understand McCain—born into a military family, with a father and a grandfather who were admirals—is to grasp that he is driven less by ideas than by an almost chivalrous notion of honor. Under torture in Vietnam, McCain once gave a false confession, and afterward he contemplated suicide, fearing, as his biographer Robert Timberg wrote, that he had "dishonored his country, his family and himself." In 1989, McCain said that enduring the Keating Five scandal was worse than being a prisoner of war, because "the Vietnamese didn't question my honor." Torie Clarke, who was McCain's press secretary at the time, told me that what was most upsetting to him was not that others were accusing him of unethical behavior; it was that he had "looked into the abyss and saw that maybe he had done something dishonorable." The experience propelled his backing, in the mid-nineties, of campaign-finance reform—one of his first major breaks with Republican orthodoxy.

Throughout his political career, McCain has seemed keenly aware of the internal tension between his ambition and his moral code. In his 2002 memoir, "Worth the Fighting For," he acknowledged, "I didn't decide to run for President to start a national crusade for the political reforms I believed in or to run a campaign as if it were some grand act of patriotism. In truth, I wanted to be President because it has become my ambition to be President. . . . In truth, I'd had the ambition for a long time." Yet during his 2000 run many aides and reporters who travelled with him—including me—thought that he often seemed more at peace when he was losing. He constantly cited his literary hero, Robert Jordan, from Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls," who, fighting the Fascists, awaits imminent death. As he put it to me at the time, "Hell of an ending."

After the South Carolina primary, he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delivered a speech on the one aspect of his campaign that he saw as a cynical tactic: his defense of the Confederate flag as a local "symbol of heritage." He said, "I feared that if I answered honestly I could not win the South Carolina primary. So I chose to compromise my principles. I broke my promise to always tell the truth. . . . I do not intend for this apology to help me evade criticism for my failure. I will be criticized by all sides for my late act of contrition. I accept it, all of it. I deserve it. Honesty is easy after the fact, when my own interests are no longer involved. I don't seek absolution. Like anyone else, I can only try to resist future temptations to abandon principle for expediency, and hope that in the end my character is judged from the totality of my life, and not by its flaws alone."

After the 2000 campaign, McCain tilted farther away from his party. Though some of that distancing was motivated by his animus toward Bush, part of it seemed to reflect a feeling of liberation from the dictates of ideology. He joined Senator Ted Kennedy in pushing for a patients' bill of rights, and worked with Democrats on far-reaching environmental legislation that would limit carbon emissions. In 2005, he was one of only seven Republicans to vote against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Most notably, he voted twice against Bush's tax cuts, having declared that "sixty per cent of the benefits . . . go to the wealthiest ten per cent of Americans," and that "Donald Trump doesn't need a tax cut."

THE COFFIN STORE

I was lugging my death from Kampala to Kraków.
Death, what a ridiculous load you can be,
like the world atremble on Atlas's shoulders.

In Kampala I'd wondered why the people, so poor,
didn't just kill me. *Why don't they kill me*?
In Kraków I must have fancied I'd find poets to talk to.

I still believed then I'd domesticated my death,
that he'd no longer gnaw off my fingers and ears.
We even had parties together: "Happy," said death,

and gave me my present, a coffin, my coffin,
made in Kampala, with a sliding door in its lid,
to look through, at the sky, at the birds, at Kampala.

That was his way, I soon understood, of reverting
to talon and snarl, for the door refused to come open:
no sky, no bird, no poets, no Kraków.

Catherine came to me then, came to me then,
"*Open your eyes, mon amour*," but death
had undone me, my knuckles were raw as an ape's,

my mind slid like a sad-ankled skate, and no matter
what Catherine was saying, was sighing, was singing,
"*Mon amour, mon amour*," the door stayed shut, oh, shut.

I heard trees being felled, skinned, smoothed,
hammered together as coffins. I heard death
snorting and stamping, impatient to be hauled off, away.

But here again was Catherine, sighing, and singing,
and the tiny carved wooden door slid ajar, just enough—
the sky, one single bird, Catherine—just enough.

—*C. K. Williams*

Tom Daschle, who was then the Senate Minority Leader, told me that he and McCain spoke several times in the spring of 2001 about the possibility of McCain's switching parties. The Democrats were one vote short of regaining a majority in the Senate, and were lobbying several potential candidates for conversion. Daschle said that McCain was "very close" to making a move. "We were almost at a point of thinking how we would roll it out," Daschle said. "We talked about committee assignments, and staffing, and other considerations that would be part of the agreement." Daschle said that he and McCain had made plans to meet at McCain's ranch, in Sedona, Arizona. Then Jim Jeffords, the liberal Republican from Vermont, announced that he was becoming an Independent, which gave the Democrats the majority, and the courting of McCain ended. McCain and his aides insist that the Senator was never close to leaving the Party, though they do not deny that there were conversations about the matter.

As McCain continued edging toward a new center in American politics, a group of his advisers began to talk casually about trying to create an independent party—like the Bull Moose Party, established by McCain's hero Theodore Roosevelt. The platform for such a party was never fully thought out, but participants told me that it included the following ideas: pushing campaign-finance reform and curtailing special interests in order to restore faith in government; affirming that the federal government had a limited but important role in public life and should not be dismantled, as Newt Gingrich's wing of the Republican Party had attempted to do; a greater call for public service, either through the military or through programs like AmeriCorps; less emphasis on divisive social issues; promoting a progressive tax system that favored the middle class rather than the rich; and regulating the excesses of the capitalist system. (Around this time, McCain appeared on CBS's "Face the Nation" and, echoing Roosevelt, said, "We have had regulatory agencies always to curb the abuses or potential abuses of the capitalist system. This is not a totally laissez-faire country.")

One participant said of the platform, "It wasn't so much conservative. It had elements of what the New Democrats were talking about." He said that the belief was that, for years, the "center in American politics had never been tapped" and that there was a middle path "away from the polarizing base." He added, "McCain was, by temperament and instinct, attracted to it."

John Weaver, another member of the group, who was McCain's top political strategist at the time, told me that he considered whether it would be possible for McCain to run for President on a third-party ticket. But he quickly concluded that the American political system made it all but impossible for such a party to win. As he put it, "This system, as it's presently set up, automatically pulls good people to a darker side of politics."

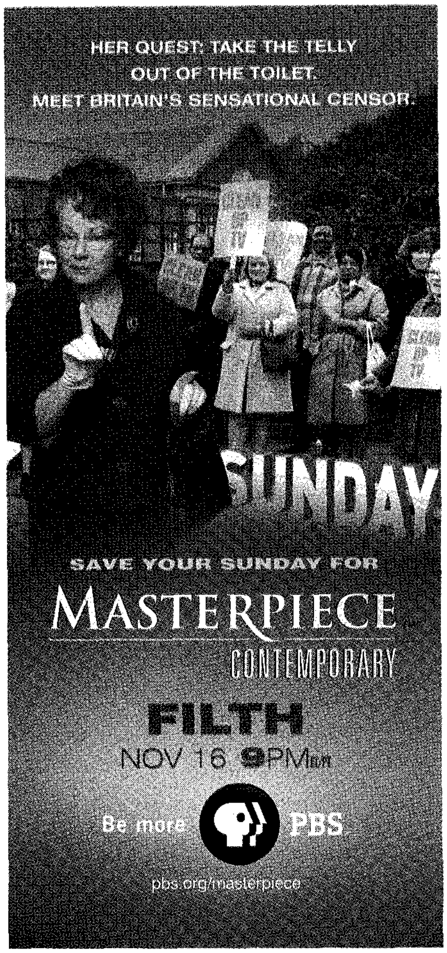
By 2004, McCain's increasing heterodoxy had made him even more deeply detested by many hard-core conservatives. On a recent radio show, Rick Santorum, the former Republican senator from Pennsylvania, recalled that "almost at every turn, on domestic policy, John McCain was not only against us but leading the charge on the other side." James Dobson, the leader of the religious group Focus on the Family, declared that McCain was "not a conservative and, in fact, has gone out of his way to stick his thumb in the eyes of those who are." Meanwhile, McCain had become so well known for his increasingly bipartisan approach that John Kerry asked him to be his running mate that year. According to aides, McCain did not seriously consider the offer—he still saw himself as a Republican, and, as an adviser later told this magazine, he did not want his career to culminate in the Vice-Presidency.

Indeed, by then McCain and his inner circle had realized that he could emerge as the Republican front-runner in 2008. Shortly after Kerry's failed overture, Bush's chief strategist, Karl Rove, sought McCain's help in reëlecting President Bush. Suddenly, the interests of the two nemeses converged: Bush needed McCain to campaign for him; McCain needed Bush's support if he was to court the conservative faithful. This pact led, in August, to their now infamous hug, in Pensacola, Florida.

Many of McCain's strategists and allies concluded that he had to shift, at least somewhat, to the right. One of his early backers, Ray LaHood, the Illinois Republican congressman, told me bluntly, "To get the nomination, McCain *had* to appeal to the base of our party." Presidential candidates always placate their bases during the primaries in order to win the nomination, but for McCain, with his reputation of unwavering principle, the task was treacherous. Still, Weaver told me, his strategic team was confident that McCain could do it: "Sometimes you can negotiate on details while maintaining true to your principles."

During the 2004 race, McCain campaigned tirelessly—"worked his tail off," in the words of Bush's press secretary—for the President. The following year, he assured conservatives that he would support Bush's tax cuts. More shocking, in the spring of 2006 he announced that he planned to give the commencement speech at Liberty University, which was run by Jerry Falwell—one of the so-called "agents of intolerance" and "forces of evil." Several weeks before the address, McCain appeared on "The Daily Show." Jon Stewart, who has said that he would have voted for McCain in 2000 had he won the Republican nomination, expressed consternation that McCain was paying tribute to the religious right. "It strikes me as something you wouldn't ordinarily do," Stewart said. When McCain insisted that he would speak at any university, Stewart asked, "Are you going into crazy base world?" McCain hesitated, then said, "I'm afraid so."

According to his aides, McCain tried to find some balance. He gave the same speech at Liberty University as he did at the New School, in New York, and, in a clear reference to his charge against the "agents of intolerance," he emphasized the need for "respect" whether "we think each other right or wrong in our views." Nevertheless, McCain was clearly shape-shifting. Hoping both to placate the Republican establishment and to gain some of Rove's organizational discipline and prowess, he recruited several of Bush's top operatives, though Weaver told me that the campaign balked at hiring anyone involved in the attacks on McCain in 2000. McCain enlisted as his campaign manager Terry Nelson, who served as national political director for Bush in 2004. The campaign also brought on Steve Schmidt, a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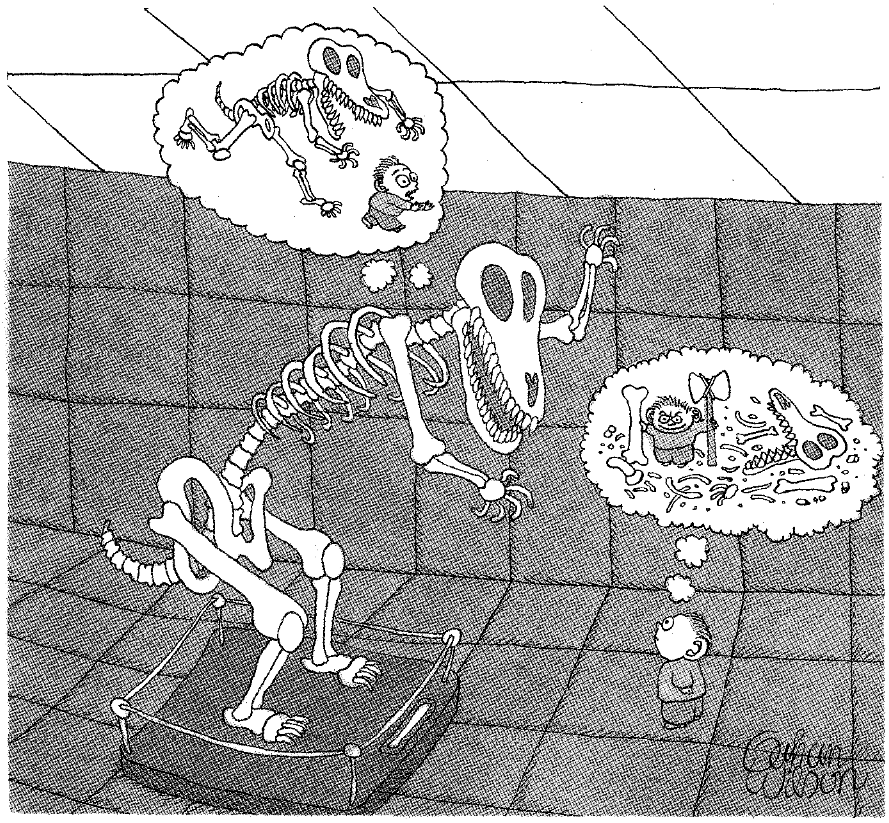


Rove acolyte known as the Bullet, and Mark McKinnon, Bush's media guru. Around Christmas of 2006, one of McCain's former Senate advisers told me that he attended a campaign event and was struck by how much the atmosphere had changed from 2000. "It was an establishment campaign," he said, and was based on the calculus that if you wanted to get anything accomplished you first had to win the nomination.

The new campaign organization, however, was beset by internal squabbling and quickly burned through its funds. In July, 2007, McCain forced out Nelson; Weaver resigned over the change, and most of the Old Guard—save Mark Salter and a few others—either left or were effectively demoted. McKinnon, who remained with the campaign at the time, told me that McCain had "put a bullet in some of his best friends." The campaign was now dominated by strategists and consultants who had little personal connection to McCain. "They have Bushies all in that operation," the former Senate adviser told me. "This is the great irony. You have layers and layers of Bushies. They don't understand what McCainism is." Schmidt, known for his military discipline and strict message control, eventually assumed command. The campaign even hired one of the operatives at the center of Bush's efforts against McCain in South Carolina in 2000: Tucker Eskew. One of McCain's friends characterized Eskew as a master of "demonization." Lindsey Graham, the Republican senator from South Carolina and one of McCain's closest allies, summed up McCain's new approach to the 2008 election: "This is not Luke Skywalker here."

According to the Washington *Post*, when McCain's top advisers told him that his only hope of winning the election was to adopt hard-right tactics, McCain agreed. Graham recalled McCain saying, "It is not my goal to run this race and be admired as the maverick that lost." Schmidt told me that there was never any discussion about having McCain suddenly change into "a conservative conservative." The campaign, however, began increasingly to exploit wedge issues, such as guns and abortion, and cast doubt on Obama's patriotism. The campaign also terminated what was a cornerstone of McCain's 2000 Presidential campaign: the Straight Talk Express. Over the years, McCain had grown so close to members of the media that he joked that they were his "base." His new campaign airplane had been designed with a large couch to accommodate reporters and evoke the interior of the Straight Talk Express, but journalists were cordoned off.

McCain and his advisers also began attacking the "liberal media," a classic Rove gambit that appealed to the conservative faithful. After the *Times* reported critically on a McCain aide's lobbying ties, Schmidt exploded: "Whatever the New York *Times* once was, it is today not by any standard a journalistic organization. It is a pro-Obama advocacy organization that every day attacks the McCain campaign."

At the same time, many pundits who had admired McCain were repelled by his policy shifts and his ruthless tactics. In July, 2008, Joe Klein, of *Time*, wrote that although he had once considered McCain "an honorable man" who would run an "honorable campaign," he had been "wrong." Richard Cohen, of the Washington *Post*, declared, "The John McCain of old is unrecognizable. He has become the sort of politician he once despised." Elizabeth Drew, who, in 2002, published a glowing book titled "Citizen McCain," lamented in *Politico* that, "in retrospect, other once-hailed McCain efforts—his cultivation of the press . . . and even his fight for campaign-finance reform (launched in the wake of his embarrassment over the Keating Five scandal)—now seem to have been simply maneuvers."

In mid-October, McCain's brother Joe—who had once said that it was his duty to "stay the hell out of the way"—sent out an e-mail pleading with the campaign to change its approach to the media:

> Let those who know [McCain] talk to the people about him, through the press. This policy of trying to so tightly "control the message" by cutting off those who know him from the cacophony of national and local voices—the reporters and the editors—is counter-intuitive, counter-experiential, and counter-productive. It creates ligatures and tourniquets that are causing gangrene. It has gradually bled away all the good will that this great man had from the press, for he alone among politicians would talk to them openly, without finesse, without guile.

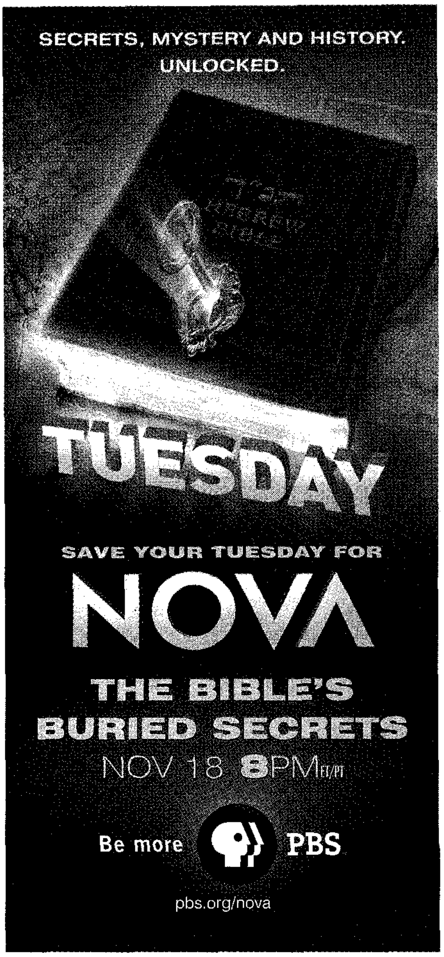
Those inside McCain's campaign note, with some justification, that the twenty-four-hour news cycle and the media's obsession with gaffes have made impromptu press conferences and unfettered access unrealistic. In a recent conversation, Salter told me that at one moment the press was criticizing McCain for lacking a central message and the next was castigating him for not being spontaneous. Salter was apoplectic over the "meta-narrative" suggesting that McCain had fundamentally changed. "There was no decision by McCain to say, 'Let's go to the dark side,'" he said. "That's just bullshit." He added, "Reporters loved the idea that he was challenging the Republican Party and the establishment, and they didn't particularly care what he was talking about" in terms of policy. "He's always been a Republican." Salter expressed a genuine sense of betrayal—a feeling clearly shared by McCain—toward journalists who had turned on McCain. "I've spent many hours trying to figure out why the press has erected a double standard that clearly favors one candidate over another," Salter said. "Maybe it started with his position on the war." He shook his head. "I'm not a shrink. It just is what it is." In the spring of 2008, he noted, McCain had embarked on a poverty tour of places like New Orleans and Selma, but virtually no one in the press paid attention. He had invited Obama to hold town-hall meetings across the country; his opponent rejected the idea. And, despite the urging of strategists, Salter said, McCain had refused to let the campaign release advertisements featuring Obama's controversial former pastor, Jeremiah Wright. "John is the same person," Salter said. "He doesn't know *how* to be any different." He went on, "Everyone kept saying, 'Where's the old happy warrior?' It was fucking crazy. The only way we could have gotten McCain to hold on to his brand, in the eyes of the media, was if McCain had bowed to the choice of the élite, which was Obama. McCain would have been crushed by twenty points, but everyone would have said what a great man he was and what a gracious loser. Anything short of that, he was going to be branded a 'new' John McCain."

But many who hoped that McCain could modify his policies without sacrificing his identity felt that he had crossed the line. He surrounded himself with conservative economic advisers, such as Phil Gramm, a fanatical proponent of deregulation, and Jack Kemp, the apostle of supply-side economics. He called for making Bush's tax cuts permanent. He declared that the estate tax, which he, like Teddy Roosevelt, had championed, was now "one of the most unfair tax laws on the books." (Grover Norquist, the head of the conservative Americans for Tax Reform, who once dismissed McCain as "the nut-job from Arizona," and who says he wants to make the federal government so small that "we can drown it in the bathtub," applauded McCain for adopting much of his organization's agenda.) McCain reversed his position on offshore drilling and endorsed the teaching of "intelligent design." He disowned his own bill on immigration reform. Whereas he had once decried the use of torture under any circumstances, he now voted against banning the same techniques of "enhanced interrogation" that had been practiced against him in Vietnam.

Bob Kerrey, who had generally defended McCain's campaign tactics as the usual mudslinging, told me, "The lamb may lie down with the lion, but he won't get a very good night's sleep. And John McCain has not been sleeping very well since crawling in bed with Grover Norquist and James Dobson."

The more McCain gave in to the base the more he seemed to need to demonize his opponent, as if to justify his own moral compromises. Friends say that other factors appeared to fuel his contempt. Daschle thought that McCain, coming out of a military tradition, felt that you must "earn your stripes," and a young, inexperienced Illinois senator's challenging him was comparable to "a lieutenant taking on an admiral." The animus also seemed to come from McCain's romantic conception of politics. To McCain, a politician truly proved his mettle by standing up to his party's leaders—something that Obama had not done—and having "the scars" to show for it. Obama represents a different model of a politician: he is a policy-driven person who tries to pass legislation by uniting interest groups and by creating new majorities for these policies through inspiring rhetoric.

In the 2000 campaign, during a time of relative prosperity, McCain could focus on campaign-finance reform and earmarks—important but marginal issues that cast him as a rebel. Politics, though, is rarely a Manichaean battle. It is about taxes and health care and budgets and interest rates and regulations. Perhaps this is why McCain so often seemed hapless on the trail. He tried to present the Iraq war as a battle between good and evil—his refrain was that he had stood, virtually alone, for the surge—but to many Americans the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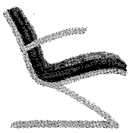
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conflict was far murkier. He made vows that were more appropriate for an action hero than for a Presidential candidate: "I'll get Osama bin Laden, my friends. I'll get him. I know how to get him. I'll get him no matter what, and I know how to do it." In his most dramatic gesture—widely interpreted as a cynical stunt but in fact a reflection of his heroic view of politics—he "suspended" his campaign to rush back to Washington during the financial crisis, as if he alone could solve it.

Near the end of the campaign, he repeatedly told his supporters, "I can inspire a generation of Americans." But by then he had already abandoned the traits that had once galvanized so many: his courage to fight his own party on ethical issues; his support of progressive tax policies; his embrace of a limited but vigorous federal system that curbed the abuses of capitalism. "The irony is that this is the moment for the 2000 John McCain," the former Senate adviser said. "The whole capitalist system is being questioned, as it was at the turn of the nineteenth century, when Roosevelt was dealing with the 'malefactors of great wealth.' "

Just before the Republican Convention, McCain, who often seemed miserable in his new right-wing guise, tried to resurrect his former identity. He decided to choose as his running mate Joe Lieberman—a pro-choice Democrat who shared McCain's views on foreign policy. The choice would have signalled both McCain's independence and his return to a more bipartisan agenda. "He wanted Lieberman badly," a McCain confidant said. But when leaders of the base threatened to challenge him at the Convention, McCain did the one thing that he believed a great politician never did. As the confidant put it, "John capitulated."

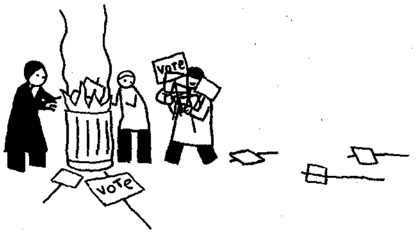
Two days before the election, in Peterborough, New Hampshire, McCain repeated his old line welcoming "Republicans, independents, Democrats, libertarians, and vegetarians" to his cause. Yet most of his old coalition had already deserted him. Even the voters who turned out at his rallies were often not there to see him: they had come for Sarah Palin. During joint events, which drew thousands more people than his solo appearances, she usually received louder cheers than he did. In Hershey, Pennsylvania, a few weeks ago, many in the crowd filed out after Palin introduced McCain, while he was starting his stump speech. On the day before the election, she and McCain campaigned separately: about five hundred people attended McCain's rally in Tampa, Florida; an estimated seventeen thousand came to see Palin in Jefferson City, Missouri. "She's like the plant in 'Little Shop of Horrors,' " McCain's friend Bob Kerrey said. "She's *devouring* him."

For all McCain's attempts to shift rightward, the conservative base never "embraced" him, as LaHood put it. Grover Norquist called McCain's relationship with conservatives a "loveless marriage." As November 4th approached, McCain's friends said, he seemed more and more irritable and angry. "He's not enjoying himself," a longtime friend who had played a key role in many of his campaigns said. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that."

McCain seemed most upset when people began to question his sense of honor. When editors at the Des Moines *Register* pressed him about the veracity of his attacks on Obama—one suggested that there had been a "detour" of his Straight Talk Express—he began to rock in his chair and clench his jaw. He snapped that he had always told the "absolute truth, and that's been my life of putting my country first."

People in McCain's circle wonder how he will cope not only with his defeat but with the perception that he has betrayed his ideals. The longtime friend said, "How does he get up in the morning? Is he at peace, or is it a horrible dark void that he carries with him forever?"

George McGovern, who lost to Richard Nixon in 1972, told me about the anguish he felt when he returned to the Senate—as McCain will soon do. "I thought everyone was either scorning me or pitying me," McGovern recalled. In 1989, he said, he ran into Walter Mondale, who had lost in a landslide to Ronald Reagan five years earlier. "He said, 'George, how long does it take to get over it after you've lost?' I said, 'I'll let you know when I get there.' " Ultimately, McGovern said, it was easier to stop brooding knowing that he had tried his "damnedest to win" but had never done anything that "wouldn't let me sleep at night."

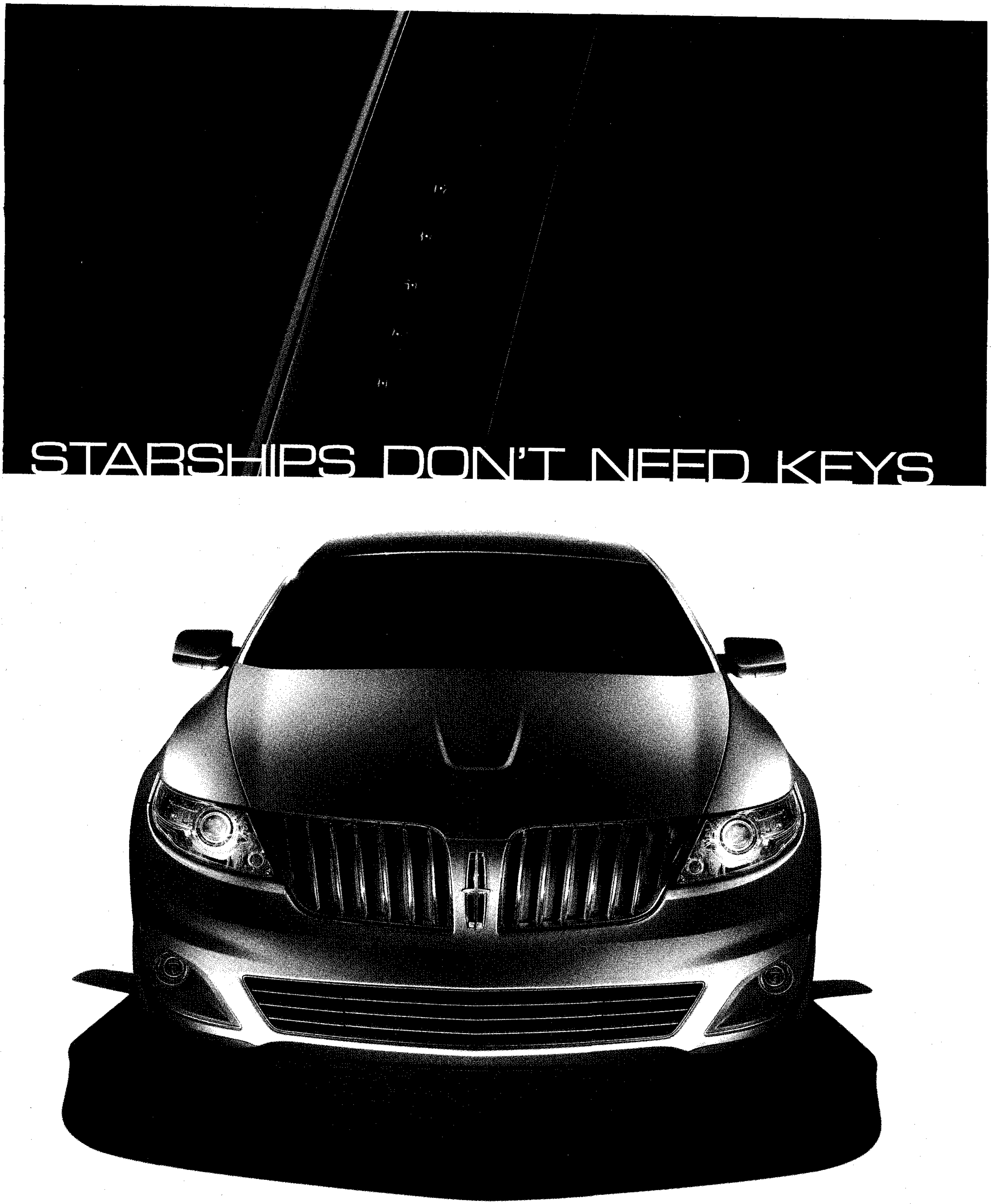


In the final weekend of the campaign, when it was almost certain that McCain was going to lose, he actually seemed the happiest. He joked and bantered with aides. He appeared on "Saturday Night Live," irreverently referring to his "strategy called the Reverse Maverick," in which "I do whatever anyone tells me."

On the night of his defeat, he gave a concession speech as memorable as the one he had delivered in South Carolina. Paying tribute to Obama and the historical importance of an African-American reaching the White House, he said, "Senator Obama has achieved a great thing for himself and for his country." He continued, "Senator Obama and I have had and argued our differences, and he has prevailed. No doubt many of those differences remain. These are difficult times for our country. And I pledge to him tonight to do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges we face. I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him but offering our next President our good will and earnest effort to find ways to come together to find the necessary compromises to bridge our differences. . . . We are fellow-Americans. And please believe me when I say no association has ever meant more to me than that."

Some of McCain's friends and supporters believe that he has done "lasting damage," as one put it, to his reputation, and that such magnanimous gestures came too late. Others are confident that the "old" McCain will return to the Senate and become a central figure, forging that elusive center. Bob Kerrey said that the bitterness of the campaign will soon fade, and McCain will again serve his country with dignity.

McCain has suggested that the public's perception of his actions is not what matters most. Hours before voting began, he appeared on "Monday Night Football," and recalled a football coach who had been one of his greatest inspirations. McCain said, "The most important lesson he taught me was that you've always got to do the honorable thing, even when nobody's looking—because maybe nobody will know, but *you'll* know." ♦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THE JOSHUA GENERATION

Race and the campaign of Barack Obama.

BY DAVID REMNICK

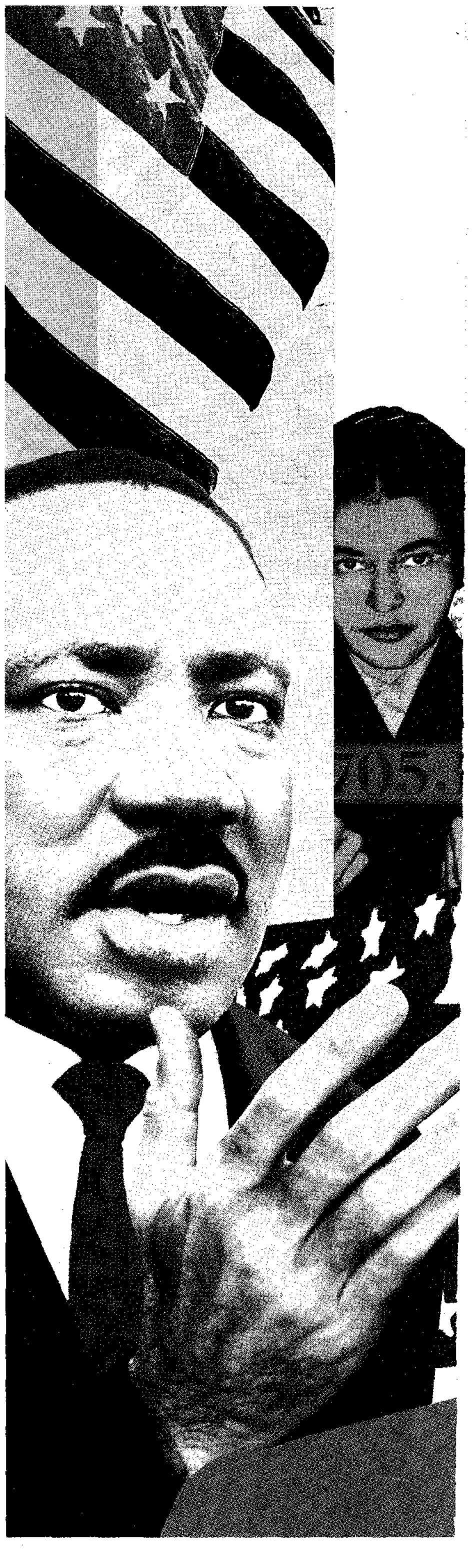
I

Barack Obama could not run his campaign for the Presidency based on political accomplishment or on the heroic service of his youth. His record was too slight. His Democratic and Republican opponents were right: he ran largely on language, on the expression of a country's potential and the self-expression of a complicated man who could reflect and lead that country. And a powerful thematic undercurrent of his oratory and prose was race. Not race as invoked by his predecessors in electoral politics or in the civil-rights movement, not race as an insistence on tribe or on redress; rather, Obama made his biracial ancestry a metaphor for his ambition to create a broad coalition of support, to rally Americans behind a narrative of moral and political progress. He was not its hero, but he just might be its culmination.

In October, 2005, two months after Hurricane Katrina, Rosa Parks died, at the age of ninety-two, in Detroit. Her signal act of defiance on the evening of December 1, 1955, her refusal to vacate her seat near the front of the Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama—what Martin Luther King, Jr., called the ultimate gesture of "I can take it no longer"—was the precipitating act of the city's bus boycott and the civil-rights movement. For two days, her body lay in state at the Capitol Rotunda, in Washington—an honor accorded only twenty-nine times before. Then, on November 2nd, in Detroit, there was a funeral service at the Greater Grace Temple Church. Thousands lined the streets to wave farewell and sing the old anthems and hymns. Four thousand packed the sanctuary. The service lasted seven hours.

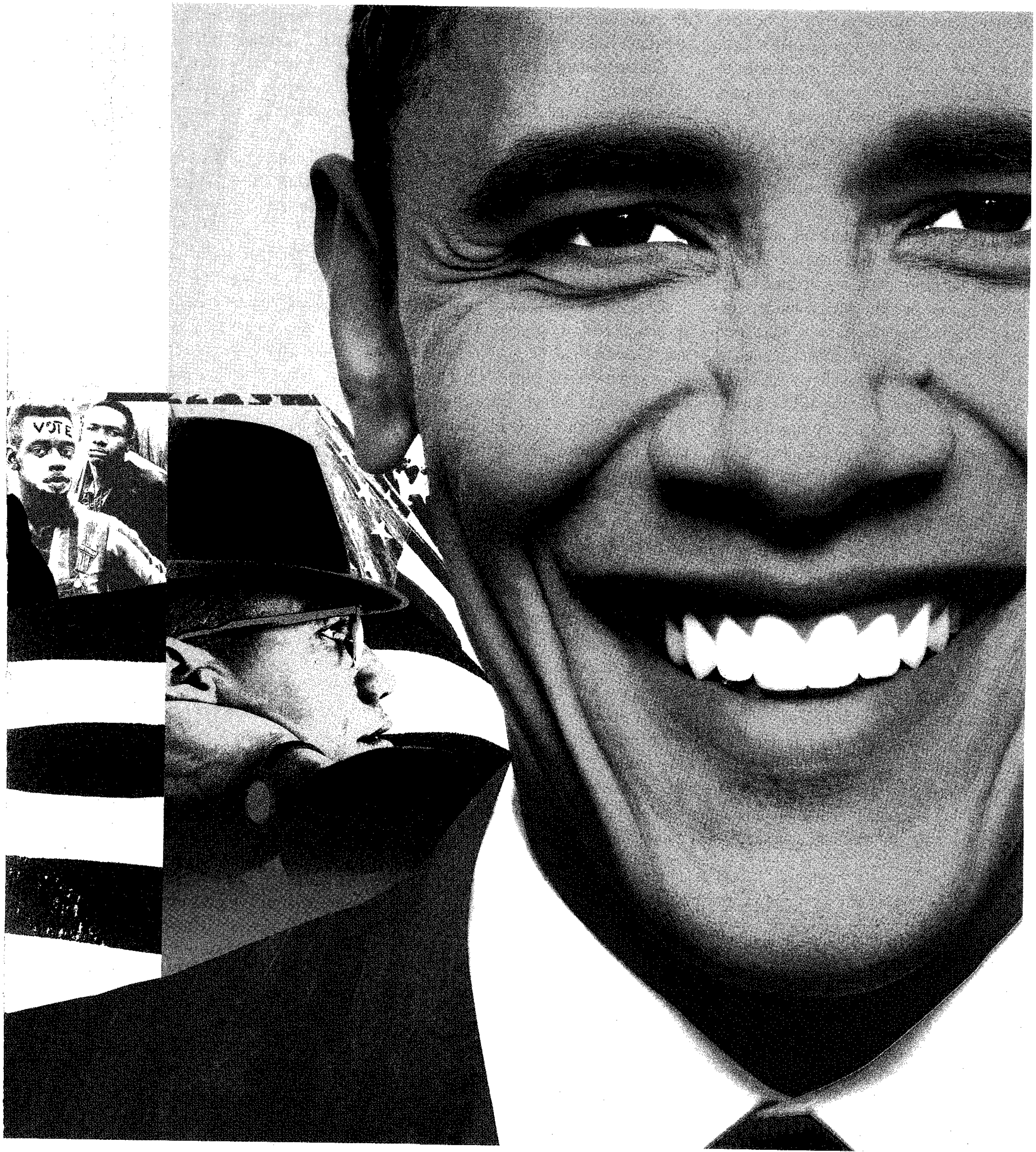
"That funeral was so long that I can hardly remember it!" Bishop T. D. Jakes, the pastor of the Potter's House, a Dallas church of thirty thousand congregants, said. "*Everyone* was there!" Jesse Jackson, the Clintons, Al Sharpton, Aretha Franklin, and a phalanx of preachers all paid tribute to Parks. Bill Clinton reminisced about riding segregated buses in Jim Crow Arkansas—and then feeling the liberating effect of Parks's act. On the street, a marine played "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes, and the congregants sang "She Would Not Be Moved."

Obama, the sole African-American member in the United States Senate, had also been invited to speak. As he sat in the pews awaiting his turn, he writes in his book "The Audacity of Hope," his mind wandered back to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina: the news footage from New Orleans of a body laid near a wall, of shirtless young men, "their legs churning through dark waters, their arms draped with whatever goods they had managed to grab from nearby stores, the spark of chaos in their eyes." A week after the hurricane, Obama had accompanied Bill and Hillary Clinton and George H. W. Bush to Houston, where they visited the thousands of refugees from New Orleans who were camped out at the Astrodome and the Reliant Center. One woman told Obama, "We didn't have nothin' before the storm. Now we got less than nothin'." The remark was a rebuke, Obama felt, to Donald Rumsfeld and other Bush Administration officials who had given him and fellow-legislators a briefing on the federal response to the hurricane; their expressions, he recalled, "bristled with confidence—and displayed not the slightest bit of remorse." In the church, Obama thought of how little had happened since. Cars were still stuck in trees and on rooftops; predatory construction firms were winning hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts, even as they skirted affirmative-action laws and hired illegal immigrants for their crews. Obama's anger, which is rarely discernible in his voice or in his demeanor, ran deep. "The sense that the nation had reached a transformative moment—that it had had its conscience stirred out of a long slumber and would launch a renewed war on poverty—had quickly died away," he wrote.



Speaking at a church in Selma, Obama was

And yet when Obama got to the lectern at Parks's funeral he betrayed no emotion, raised no words of protest. He was restrained and brief, as if taking pains



atriarch and not a prophet but the prophesied. "I'm here because somebody marched," he said. "I'm here because you all sacrificed for me."

to say nothing to compete with the Clintons, who had forged a close bond with the African-American community over the years, let alone the older organizers, activists, and preachers. Obama was still a relative stranger to the audience in Detroit.

"In terms of operating in the space of African-American politics, people hadn't seen him much," Mark Morial, a former mayor of New Orleans and the president of the National Urban League, said. "They didn't really know who he was, where he came from, or what he was all about. You don't come in there as a senator and try to upstage anyone or abuse the podium and give a speech that's too good. He has to think, My presence is enough. The people who worked with Rosa Parks—this was their time to speak."

It was only on March 4, 2007, a few weeks after he announced his candidacy for President, that Obama explicitly inserted himself in the time line of American racial politics. At the Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, in Selma, Alabama, he joined older civil-rights leaders and

JOHN RITTER

churchmen in commemorating the voting-rights marches a generation ago. From the pulpit, Obama paid tribute to "the Moses generation"—to Martin Luther King and John Lewis, to Anna Cooper and the Reverend Joseph Lowery—the men and women of the movement, who marched and suffered but who, in many cases, "didn't cross over the river to see the Promised Land." He thanked them, praised their courage, honored their martyrdom. But he spent much of his speech on his own generation, "the Joshua generation," and tried to answer the question "What's called of us?" Life had improved for African-Americans, but "we shouldn't forget that better is not good enough." Discrimination still existed. History was being forgotten. Schools were underfunded, citizens left uninsured, especially minorities. People were looking for "that Oprah money" but had forgotten the need for service, for discipline, for political will.

In Selma, Obama evoked a narrative for what lay ahead, and in that narrative Obama was not a patriarch and not a prophet but—the suggestion was distinct—the prophesied. "I'm here because somebody marched," he said. "I'm here because you all sacrificed for me. I stand on the shoulders of giants." He described the work that lay ahead for the Joshua generation and implicitly positioned himself at its head, as its standard-bearer.

And yet Obama embarked on a long, exhausting quest for the Democratic nomination, determined to avoid making race a singular theme of his day-to-day campaigning. His issues were Iraq, the economy, health care, the environment—issues with no identity attached. But as he prepared for the Democratic Convention Obama began to feel the weight of his historic distinction.

On August 28th, just hours before his speech at Mile High Stadium, in Denver, Obama had been rehearsing in a suite at the Westin Hotel. That night, he would appear before more than eighty thousand people. Now his audience was three: his political strategist, David Axelrod; a speechwriter, Jon Favreau; and the teleprompter operator. The rehearsal was mainly an exercise in comfort, in making sure that there was no awkward syntax, no barriers to clarity. Late in the speech, Obama came to a passage paying homage to the March on Washington, forty-five years earlier to the day, when hundreds of thousands of people gathered near the Lincoln Memorial to "hear a young preacher from Georgia speak of his dream." Suddenly, Obama stopped. He couldn't get past the phrase "forty-five years ago."

"There was a catch in his voice," Axelrod recalled.

"Greg tries to be philosophical about things."

Obama excused himself and took a short, calming walk around the room. "This is really hitting me," he said. Obama told Axelrod and Favreau that he was coming to realize what a "big deal this is."

"Usually, he is so composed, but he needed the time," Axelrod said.

"It's funny, I think all of us go through this," Favreau recalled. "We've gone through this whole campaign and, contrary to what anyone might think, we don't think of the history much, because it's a crazy environment and you're going twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And so there are very few moments—and I think it's the same with Barack—there are very few moments when he stops and thinks, I could be the first African-American elected President."

2

Long before he ever had to think through the implications, racial and otherwise, of running for President, Barack Obama needed to make sense of himself—to himself. The memoir that he published when he was thirty-three, "Dreams from My Father," explored his biracial heritage: his white Kansas-born mother, his black Kenyan father, almost completely absent from his life. The memoir is written with more freedom, with greater introspection and irony, than any other by a modern American politician. Obama introduces himself as an American whose childhood took him to Indonesia and Hawaii, whose grandfathers included Hussein Onyango Obama, "a prominent farmer, an elder of the tribe, a medicine man with healing powers."

As a young man, Obama was consumed with self-doubt, trying always to reconcile the unsettling contradictions of his history. His parents married in 1960, when interracial marriage was still prohibited in almost half the states of the union. As Obama entered adolescence, in Hawaii, his father had returned to Africa and started a new family, but, at the same time, the boy was careful around his white friends not to mention his mother's race; he began to think that by doing so he was ingratiating himself with whites. He learned to read unease in the faces of others, the "split second adjustments they have to make," when they found out that he was the son of a mixed marriage.

"Privately, they guess at my troubled heart, I suppose—the mixed blood, the divided soul, the ghostly image of the tragic mulatto trapped between two worlds," he writes, with the wry distance of the older self regarding the younger.

Obama's mother was an earnest and high-minded idealist, "a lonely witness for secular humanism, a soldier for the New Deal, Peace Corps, position-paper liberalism." With Barack's father gone, she emphasized, even sentimentalized, blackness to her son. She loved the film "Black Orpheus," which her son later found so patronizing to the "childlike" characters that he wanted to walk out of the theatre. She'd bring home the records of Mahalia Jackson, the speeches of Martin Luther King. To her, "every black man was Thurgood Marshall or Sidney Poitier; every black woman Fannie Lou Hamer or Lena Horne. To be black was to be the beneficiary of a great inheritance, a special destiny, glorious burdens that only we were strong enough to bear."

As a teen-ager in Hawaii, Obama suffered less from outright discrimination than from the sense that "something wasn't quite right"; he was put off by the white girls who told him about their affection for Stevie Wonder, by the older white men who told him he was cool. Surrounded mainly by white relations and friends, Obama looked for a mentor. Holed up in his room and ignoring his homework, he read James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and W. E. B. Du Bois and tried to "reconcile the world as I'd found it with the terms of my birth":

> But there was no escape to be had. In every page of every book, in Bigger Thomas and invisible men, I kept finding the same anguish, the same doubt; a self-contempt that neither irony nor intellect seemed able to deflect. Even Du Bois's learning and Baldwin's love and Langston's humor eventually succumbed to its corrosive force, each man finally forced to doubt art's redemptive power, each man finally forced to withdraw, one to Africa, one to Europe, one deeper into the bowels of Harlem, but all of them in the same weary flight, all of them exhausted, bitter men, the devil at their heels. Only Malcolm X's autobiography seemed to offer something different. His repeated acts of self-creation spoke to me.

"The Autobiography of Malcolm X" did not turn Obama into a black nationalist or a street preacher, but it did provide a literary and personal template: the story of the young black man who flirts with dissolution and, through reading and determination, realizes his potential. It is the template of many such books, including Claude Brown's "Manchild in the Promised Land." "Junkie. Pothead," Obama wrote. "That's where I'd been headed: the final, fatal role of the young would-be black man."

Obama, of course, never suffered like the young Malcolm Little or Claude Brown; Honolulu in the seventies was not Lansing in the thirties or Harlem in the forties. But the key difference was in the nature of his quest for identity. To be black was, for him, as much a matter of aspiration as of inheritance. It was an identity he had to seek out and master. When Obama shared his adolescent reading with some African-American friends, one told him, "I don't need no books to tell me how to be black." From then on, Obama decided to keep his explorations to himself and "disguise my feverish mood."

Sometimes, as one reads "Dreams from My Father," it's hard to know where the real angst ends and the self-dramatizing of the backward glance begins, but there is little doubt that Obama was at sea, particularly where race was concerned. To ease that pain, to "flatten out the landscape of my heart," he would do what kids sometimes do: he drank, he smoked grass, and, in his unforgettably offhand formulation, he did "a little blow" when he "could afford it."

What Obama did learn in those days was the strategic benefit of a calm and inviting temperament. When his mother came to his room one day, prepared to remonstrate with him about his weak performance in school and the hazy direction that his life was taking, he flashed her, as he recalls, "a reassuring smile and patted her hand and told her not to worry." He didn't get his back up, he didn't yell. People, he was learning, "were satisfied as long as you were courteous and smiled and made no sudden moves. They were more than satisfied; they were relieved—such a pleasant surprise to find a well-mannered young black man who didn't seem angry all the time."

The historian David Levering Lewis, who has written biographies of King and Du Bois, told me that after reading Obama's books he had the sense of a young man almost alone in the world, trying to find a place. "The orphanage of his life compels him to scope out possibilities and escape hatches," he said. "This very smart mother was somewhat absent, and certainly the father was, and the grandfather marched with Patton, but he was not a rock. Obama is in the world almost solo and he learns to negotiate."

When he arrived, in 1979, as a freshman at Occidental College, in Los Angeles, Obama wanted "to avoid being mistaken for a sellout." He hung around with the "politically active black students, the foreign students . . . the Marxist professors and structural feminists and punk-rock performance poets." At night, in the dorms, they "discussed neocolonialism, Frantz Fanon, Eurocentrism, and patriarchy. . . . We were alienated."

After Obama graduated from Columbia (he'd transferred for his last two years), he set out for Chicago, in search of work as a community organizer. He would lie awake at night thinking of "romantic images" of the civil-rights movement, the "grainy black and white" scenes unspooling in his mind. He sought admission somehow into that distant world of seriousness and commitment—a connection to "the Moses generation." He craved authentic experience, a sense of service and belonging, and a racial identity: "That was my idea of organizing. It was a promise of redemption."

Methodically, Obama went about meeting important members of the older generations on the South Side, African-American elders who could advise him and, subtly, approve of him. Timuel Black, an activist in his late eighties who has published oral histories of the black migration from the South, told me that Obama came to him eager to soak up everything he could about the politics, churches, and neighborhoods of the city. But, even as Obama found his way as a community organizer, working for tenants' rights and job training at the Altgeld projects, on the far South Side, he never quite stopped seeing in the faces of young black men reminders of his own past, and the direction he might have taken:

> One of them could be me. Standing there, I try to remember the days when I would have been sitting in a car like that, full of inarticulate resentments and desperate to prove my place in the world. . . . The swagger that carries me into a classroom drunk or high,

PREVIOUS SPREAD: AFTER JAMES ROSENQUIST, "PRESIDENT ELECT" (1960-61); PHOTOGRAPHS FROM LEFT, STEVE SCHAPIRO; AP; BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM; EVE ARNOLD/MAGNUM; PLATON

knowing that my teachers will smell beer or reefer on my breath, just daring them to say something.

Obama went to Harvard Law School, where he became the first African-American elected president of the *Law Review*. Studious, disciplined, ambitious, Obama received, in 1991, the honor of being asked to speak at the annual banquet of the Harvard Black Law Students Association, an occasion at which a prominent judge or attorney is usually featured. One professor at the banquet, Randall Kennedy, was impressed by the deference that a ballroom of students, so full of sap and self-regard, paid the young man.

As Kennedy followed Obama's career, he was struck by the uniqueness of his background and how it may have affected both his temperament and his public appeal. "He's operating outside the precincts of black America," Kennedy said. "He is growing up in Hawaii, for God's sake. And then, when he comes to the mainland and tries to find his way, he has to work at it. He does have to go find it. He is not socialized like other people. I can't help thinking that he might have thought it a burden at the time, but maybe some of the things he missed out on were a benefit to miss out on. For one thing, he didn't absorb the learned responses, the learned mantras and slogans, the learned resentments of that time that one got in college."

David Levering Lewis told me that he read the memoir as if Obama were a densely layered character in a coming-of-age novel. "To say he is constructing himself sounds pejorative, but he is open to the world in a way that most Americans have not had the opportunity to be," Lewis said. "That is something that outsiders have to do. But, as he evolves, the African-American pathway is the pathway to service, to success, and to a more complete self-definition."

3

For Obama, the politics of race took on a less abstract cast once he returned to Chicago and settled in Hyde Park, with his wife, Michelle. Hyde Park and Kenwood make up a South Side neighborhood that takes in the University of Chicago and is as distinctive as George H. W. Bush's Greenwich, Connecticut. By the middle of the twentieth century, the area was home to Jews (some of whom came from Europe to escape anti-Semitism) and blacks who were starting to enter the middle class. The neighborhood today is racially mixed: of the forty-nine thousand residents, fifty-two per cent are black, thirty per cent are white, nine per cent are Asian, four per cent are Hispanic.

A measure of self-regard is also part of the Hyde Park atmosphere. "It's a magical community," John Rogers, Jr., a close friend of the Obamas, who runs Ariel Investments, said. "When you remember that there have been just three African-American senators since Reconstruction, it tells you something that two of them, Barack and Carol Moseley Braun, came from Hyde Park." (The third, Edward Brooke, was from Massachusetts.) Louis Farrakhan's stained-glass-fronted house is a few blocks from Obama's, and so is Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition headquarters. Muhammad Ali once lived nearby. "Hyde Park is the real world as it should be," Obama's friend and adviser Valerie Jarrett told Peter Slevin, of the Washington *Post*. "If we could take Hyde Park and we could help make more Hyde Parks around the country, I think we would be a much stronger country."

Over all, the neighborhood is liberal—Jesse Jackson says that the area has been a nexus of "social activism and also progressive, multiracial, multicultural politics for as long as I've been here, since 1964"—and that quality has made it an occasional target for conservative disdain. An article in *The Weekly Standard* observed that Obama's neighbors looked "like NPR announcers." And yet there are complexities within liberal Hyde Park—especially in the black community—that have played a role in Obama's evolving political life.

Running in 1996 from the South Side, Obama won a seat in the Illinois State Senate, but three years later, when he tried to take on Bobby Rush, a four-term Democratic incumbent in the House of Representatives, Obama got a lesson in Chicago politics. The First Congressional District included not only Hyde Park but far less affluent neighborhoods like Englewood and Woodlawn. Rush, a former leader of the Black Panthers in Chicago, made easy work of Obama. Jesse Jackson said that Rush "was and is an icon in the civil-rights movement" in Chicago and had established himself, first on the City Council and then in Congress. "So this relatively new guy, moving on him, didn't sit well," said Jackson, who supported Rush.

Rush did not hesitate to mock Obama as inauthentic—and, by inference, insufficiently black. "He went to Harvard and became an educated fool," Rush told the Chicago *Reader* during the campaign. "Barack is a person who read about the civil-rights protests and thinks he knows all about it." State Senator Donne Trotter, who was also vying for Rush's seat, told the same reporter that "Barack is viewed in part to be the white man in blackface in our community. You have only to look at his supporters. Who pushed him to get where he is so fast? It's these individuals in Hyde Park, who don't always have the best interest of the community in mind." Rush's tactics were brutal, and they were effective: Obama lost the primary by thirty points.

"I was completely mortified and humiliated," Obama told me while he was still only considering a Presidential run. "The biggest problem in politics is the fear of loss. It's a very public thing, which most people don't have to go through. Obviously, the flip side of publicity and hype is that, when you fall, folks are right there, snapping away."

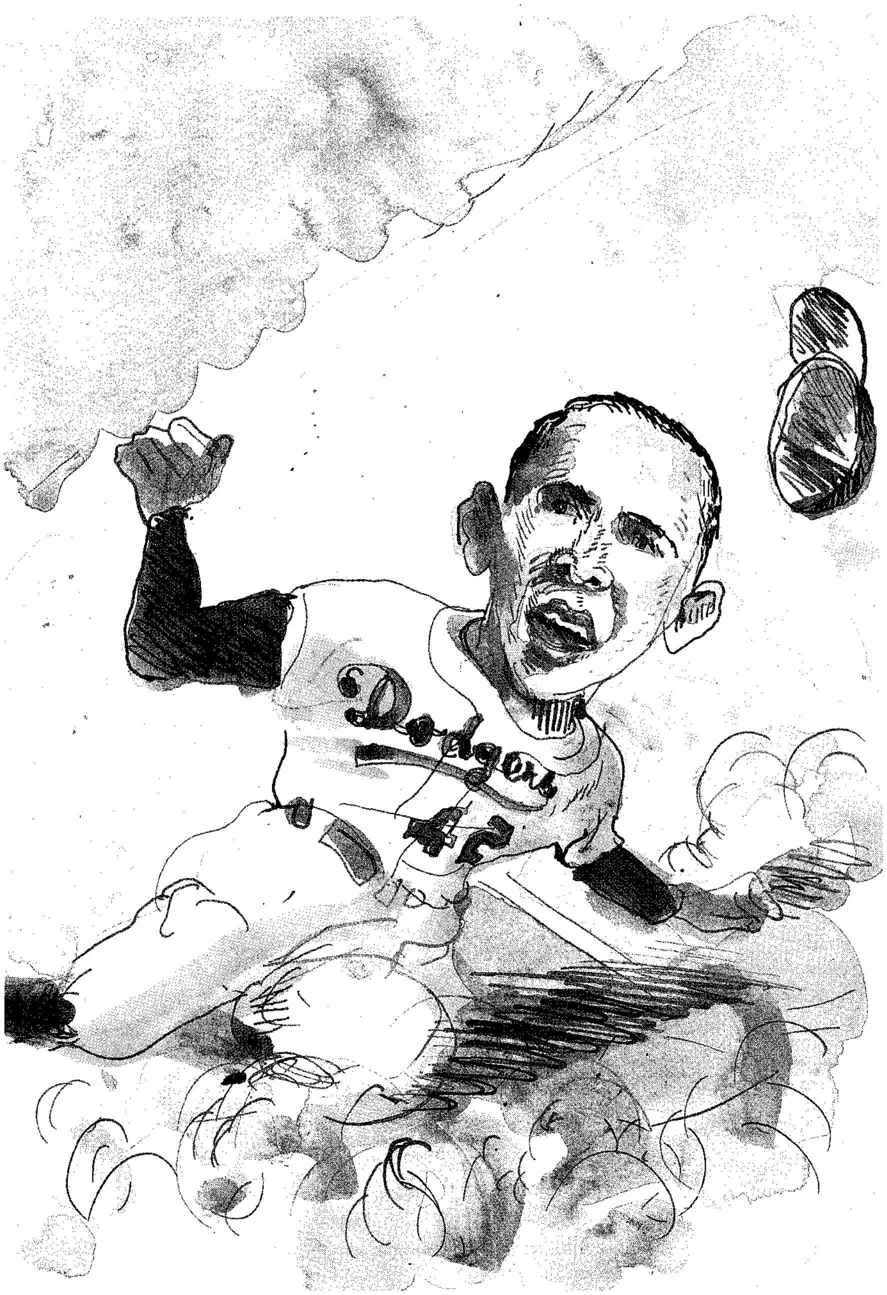
An essential part of what revived Obama's political prospects was a Hyde Park-centered circle of younger black businesspeople who held him close, advised him, and helped to support his future campaigns. The circle includes John Rogers, Jr., who knew Michelle Obama's brother, Craig, when they played basketball at Princeton; Valerie Jarrett, the former board chairman of the Chicago Stock Exchange and a close adviser; and Marty Nesbitt, the president of the Parking Spot, a major parking-lot company.

"We all have dinner together, we take vacations together, play golf and basketball together, our kids go to school together," Nesbitt told me. It is a circle linked in the way of boomer and post-boomer American élites: intersecting paths at top colleges and professional schools; crisscrossing wires of mutual professions, friends, charities, Little League teams. Nesbitt's wife, Anita Blanchard, is an obstetrician who delivered Obama's two daughters. Michelle

Obama worked for Jarrett. And so on. The business friends saw in Obama the kind of intelligent, idealistic, yet moderate politician who represented them in a way that the older generation of Hyde Park leaders no longer could. They introduced Obama to the Commercial Club crowd downtown, to more friends of means beyond Chicago. This was part of what Obama was talking about when he referred to "the Joshua generation"—the successful, talented, networking, and, in many cases, idealistic daughters and sons who benefitted from struggles that they could not have known firsthand.

In 2004, Obama won a seat in the U.S. Senate. By the time he published his second book, "The Audacity of Hope," two years later, he'd been a sensation as the keynote speaker at the Democratic Convention and sparked talk of a Presidential run. "Audacity" is a more conventional and careful book than "Dreams from My Father." It is a largely programmatic text, a reasoned manifesto rather than a memoir, but it does manage to reveal that Obama's sense of identity had broadened and found its level; he presents himself as a mature man settled on a sense of mission. He writes that he has known the slights experienced by any black man in America—the couple who toss him the keys outside a restaurant, thinking that he is the valet; the police car that pulls him over for no reason—and is under no illusion that a "post-racial" world is imminent. And yet he also sees the profound Americanness of his complex origins, even their political potency.

"As the child of a black man and a white woman," he writes, "I've never had the option of restricting my loyalties on the basis of race, or measuring my worth on the basis of tribe." His was not a typical African-American identity or experience, but it described someone who could conceive of becoming President of the United States.

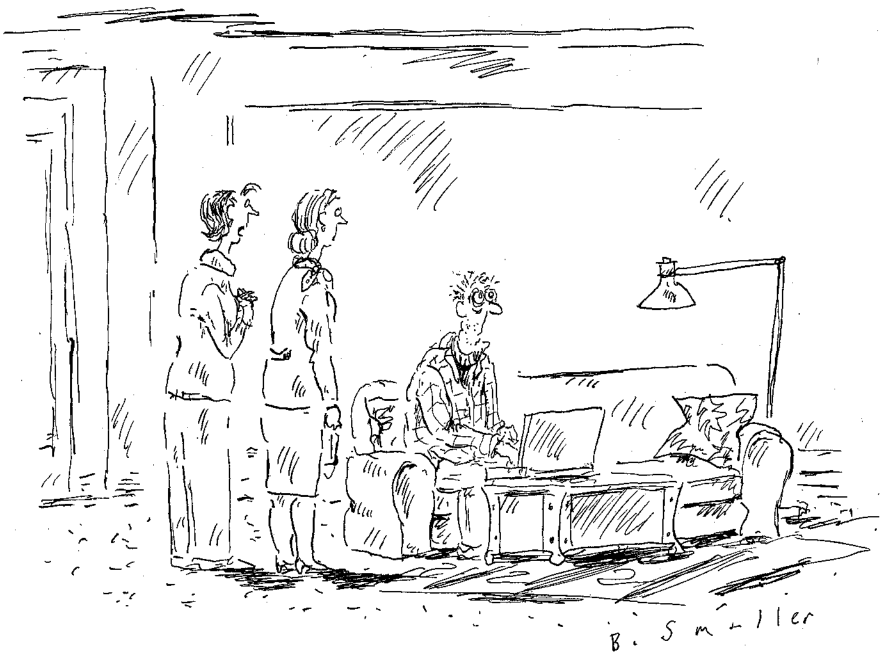


BARRY BLITT

4

Despite the small number of African-Americans holding office since Reconstruction in districts and states where blacks were not in a majority, there has always been talk—at times derisive or farcical; at times quixotic, even messianic—of a black President. As early as 1904, George Edwin Taylor, a newspaperman born in Arkansas, accepted the nomination of the all-black National Liberty Party to run, but even much later in the century the prospect of a black Presidency was almost always a discussion held in the spirit of dreaming. "We'd wonder, How long?" Martin Luther King's press secretary in Chicago, Don Rose, recalled in an echo of the old movement chant, "How long? Not long!" In 1967, members of the National Conference for New Politics tried to persuade King to run on a national ticket with Benjamin Spock. King refused, knowing that he would never win and might damage his reputation in the process. Since then, a number of black men and women have run, but none with serious prospects of winning and a few for purely symbolic reasons: among them were the comedian and writer Dick Gregory and the Black Panther Party leader Eldridge Cleaver, in 1968; the Brooklyn congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, in 1972; King's follower Jesse Jackson, in 1984 and 1988; the conservative activist and former diplomat Alan Keyes, in 1996 and 2000; and Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley Braun, in 2004.

Some of those candidacies had concrete results—Chisholm introduced the reality of a viable black candidate; Jackson won a total of fourteen primaries and caucuses in his two runs for the Democratic nomination—yet in the early twenty-first century few blacks believed that a black candidate would attract



"He's suffering from excessive-poll-monitoring withdrawal."

• •

enough white votes to win the office.

The realm of popular culture, meanwhile, provided a shifting register of the attendant yearnings and anxieties. In Irving Wallace's Johnson-era best-seller, "The Man," Douglass Dilman, a black senator from the Midwest, becomes President after the incumbent, the Speaker of the House, and the Vice-President die. Dilman is full of self-doubt ("I am a black man, not yet qualified for human being, let alone for President"); he gets impeached and eventually wins acquittal by a single vote.

In the seventies, Richard Pryor, when he was hosting a variety show on network television, took on the subject as a matter of comic flight: once a black man was in office, would he be loyal to his race or to his country? Elected the fortieth President of the United States, President Pryor opens his first press conference calmly and with only a hint of racial pride. Before long, though, he allows that he will consider appointing the Black Panther leader Huey Newton as director of the F.B.I. ("He knows the ins and outs of the F.B.I., if anybody knows") and intends to get more black quarterbacks and coaches into the N.F.L. It's the same gag about black power and white anxiety that's at the center of "Putney Swope," the 1969 Robert Downey, Sr., film, in which a seemingly mild-mannered black advertising executive is elected to chair the board of a white-run firm, whereupon he throws out all but one token white guy, replaces the rest with militant blacks, and renames the firm Truth and Soul, Inc.

Before the country could realize a black Presidency, it seems, popular culture conceived it—first as comedy, then as commonplace. Morgan Freeman, as President Tom Beck, prepares the world for an all-destroying comet in "Deep Impact"; in "24," President David Palmer, played by Dennis Haysbert, wards off nuclear attack—and after he is killed, his brother becomes President. In Hollywood's imaginings, over the past decade, a black President is no longer a fantastical premise; it's an incidental plot point, a casting choice.

In 2006, David Axelrod, a former political reporter for the Chicago *Tribune* who had become a political strategist and helped run Obama's Senate campaign, began dropping hints around town. He told friends that, while "usually the politician chooses the moment, sometimes the moment chooses the politician." John Lewis, the Georgia congressman, told me how he had brought Obama to Atlanta three years ago for an event celebrating his sixty-fifth birthday, and, as they walked the streets together, blacks and whites would come up to Obama and tell him to run. "And when I introduced him that night," Lewis went on, "I said that one day this man would be President of the United States."

In November of 2006, at the offices of a Washington law firm, Obama held one of a series of secret brainstorming sessions about his chances. He had been touring the country, promoting "The Audacity of Hope," and, at each stop, he'd received encouragement. But could he overcome the charge of inexperience? Could he challenge the Clinton machine? After a while, according to the *Times,* Broderick Johnson, a prominent D.C. lawyer and lobbyist, asked, "What about race?"

Obama replied, "I believe America is ready," and little more was said on the subject. Obama could not run a campaign like Jackson's, which had relied heavily on a black base and sought a "rainbow coalition" of left-leaning ethnics, gays, and union members; instead, he would aim at a notionally limitless coalition organized around a center-left politics.

"I don't think Barack's candidacy was like any other candidacy," Axelrod said. "He was the first African-American to come along as a legitimate contender whose candidacy was viewed in the broadest terms." In his Senate race, Obama had campaigned hard and successfully in southern-Illinois towns nearer to Little Rock than to Chicago, and in white areas of northwest Chicago where Harold Washington had been booed in 1983, when he first ran for mayor. "Barack would come back from these white towns and say, 'They're just like my grandparents from Kansas,' " Axelrod said. "That's one of his gifts: there is no room he walks into where he doesn't feel comfortable and make the people feel that way. It's both his personality and his background—one contributes to the other. There's no doubt that being biracial contributes to a sense that he doesn't compartmentalize people by race or ethnicity or background."

Even black leaders who were initially wary of him came to recognize his advantages. "His background helped," Al Sharpton said. "He had a primary understanding of peoples that we may not have had. He could meet with me and then with a representative from Kansas and understand the nuances as well as the content of both conversations."

On January 21, 2007, Obama attended the N.F.C. championship game between the Chicago Bears and the New Orleans Saints, at Soldier Field, in Chicago. Invited to the suite of Linda Johnson Rice, the chairman and C.E.O. of *Ebony*, Obama mingled with other guests, including Mark Morial. Obama admitted that he was thinking about running for President—by then an open secret—and, when Morial asked him what his plan was, Obama said that he had to win the caucus in Iowa, an almost entirely white state. "If I do that, I'm credible," he said.

Three weeks later, on the steps of the Old State Capitol building in Springfield, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln began his 1858 Senate campaign, Obama announced his candidacy, admitting to "a certain audacity" in his venture. He hardly mentioned race in his speech except in the context of Lincoln and his struggle to unite a divided nation.

Axelrod, who had been the successful strategist for black mayoral candidates in Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Cleveland, became Obama's chief strategist. Most crucial, Axelrod had been the guiding hand for Deval Patrick, who grew up in the Robert Taylor Homes housing projects, on the South Side of Chicago, and who, in 2006, won election as the first African-American governor of Massachusetts. Axelrod was not a believer in the modish talk of "post-racial" politics, but he was convinced that times had changed—"barriers were breaking down."

In a gesture that signalled that Obama was going to be a cautious and highly disciplined candidate, not least on race, he and his advisers decided to disinvite Jeremiah Wright, his friend and pastor at the Trinity United Church of Christ, on the South Side, from delivering the invocation. Wright is a pivotal character in "Dreams from My Father," a welcoming elder who exerted a powerful spiritual influence over Obama. He'd been essential to Obama's education in Christianity, in social issues, in race, and in the ways of the South Side. Although few people knew yet about Wright's penchant for incendiary rhetoric in his sermons, he had already been quoted in the press in ways that Axelrod and Obama knew might alienate voters in, say, Ames, Iowa, or Manchester, New Hampshire.

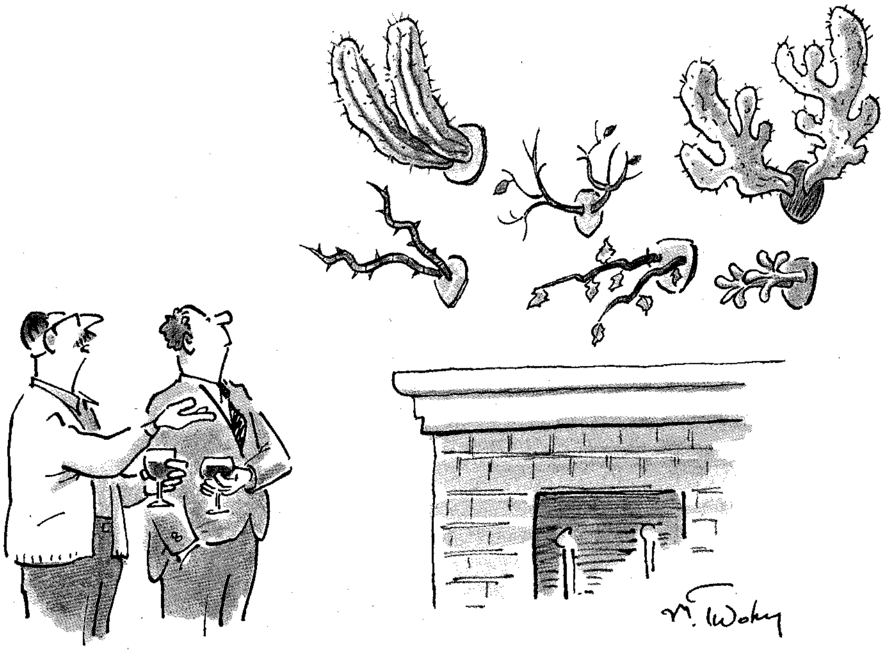
Curiously, Obama's initial support did not come from African-Americans. There were obstacles, especially, in the black establishment. "Barack came to my kitchen," Vernon Jordan, an attorney who had been president of the National Urban League and became a close adviser and friend to the Clintons, said. "My wife, Ann, and I gave him his first fund-raiser in D.C. when he ran for the Senate. He came to my house, and we had this long four-hour dinner, and I said, 'Barack, I am an old Negro who believes that to everything there is a season—and I don't think this is your season.' I was so wrong. Anyway, I said, 'If you do run, as I think you will, I will be with Hillary. I am too old to trade friendship for race. But, if you win, I will be with you.' "

In the early days of the primary campaign, Clinton led Obama among blacks by more than twenty points. "They didn't know him, a), and, b), they thought it was a long shot," Jesse Jackson said. "Black voters are comparatively conservative and practical." In 1984, Jackson had struggled to get support from African-Americans who didn't think he had a chance. "Most of my relationships and labor allies went with [Walter] Mondale," he said.

With some exceptions, most civil-rights-era leaders and politicians, including John Lewis and Andrew Young, were lining up behind Clinton—out of loyalty and a belief that she would win. Lewis, for one, could not imagine himself spurning a Clinton. In August, 1998, after Bill Clinton went on television to explain his relationship with Monica Lewinsky—an unprecedented humiliation—Lewis invited him to Union Chapel on Martha's Vineyard, to commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the March on Washington. "He didn't want to come, but I convinced him," Lewis told me. "And, when the time came, I got up to introduce him and said, 'Mr. President, I was with you in the beginning and I will be with you in the end.' We both cried. . . . How could I abandon a friend like that?"

The Reverend Joseph Lowery, a co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a leader of the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, told an audience in Atlanta in January, 2007, that "a slave mentality" still haunted those African-Americans who counselled Obama to wait his turn. He compared those who discouraged Obama to the white ministers in Birmingham who told Martin Luther King a half century ago that the time was not ripe for civil dissent. "Martin said the people who were saying 'later' were really saying 'never,' " Lowery said. "The time to do right is always right now."

The dilemma was plain. "These were



"Nowadays my safaris are green."

people who knew Bill and Hillary and thought well of them and couldn't quite believe this young guy with a foreign name had a chance to get elected," the civil-rights activist Julian Bond said. "After two Jackson campaigns, after Al Sharpton's campaign, after Shirley Chisholm, it seemed that these symbolic races hadn't delivered much. The promise had been that these candidates would extract some kind of benefits from the winners and the black cause would be advanced. That turned out to be less true than they had hoped."

Obama was disappointed that black leaders did not rally to him in greater numbers, but in Iowa he was engaged in a much more immediate project—to prove himself capable of winning white votes. And, as he campaigned in the state, his appeal was less like Jesse Jackson's in 1984 and more like Gary Hart's. His earliest support came from what strategists call "better-educated, upper-status whites," mainly college-educated, younger people who appreciated his outspoken opposition to the invasion of Iraq when he was still a state senator.

Obama was extremely careful about racial politics. He spoke out on a prolonged and ugly racial conflict in Jena, Louisiana, but did not join a march. "If I were a candidate, I'd be all over Jena," Jesse Jackson said at the time. According to a South Carolina paper, Jackson thought that Obama, in his restraint, was "acting like he's white." But Sharpton, who led demonstrations in Jena, said that he came to understand Obama's thinking. "There are different traditions in the African-American community, different styles," Sharpton said. "Obama doesn't come out of the Martin Luther King or Jesse Jackson tradition of activists. Obama comes from the mainstream electoral tradition, the Doug Wilder tradition."

On January 3, 2008, Obama won Iowa. His victory speech that night was emblematic of the subtle way that he would treat race:

> You know, they said this day would never come. They said our sights were set too high. They said this country was too divided, too disillusioned to ever come together around a common purpose. But on this January night, at this defining moment in history, you have done what the cynics said we couldn't do. . . . We are one people. And our time for change has come.

An astonishing rhetorical move: Obama calls on the familiar cadences and syntax of the black church. He gestures toward what everyone is thinking about—the launching of a campaign that could lead to the first African-American President. "This was the moment when we tore down barriers that have divided us for too long," he says. "When we rallied people of all"—wait for it—"parties and ages." The displacement is deft and effective. We know that he means racial barriers—we can *feel* it—but the invocation is more powerful for being unspoken. The key pronoun is always "we," or "us." The historical fight for equal rights comes only at the end of a peroration on national purpose:

> Hope is what led a band of colonists to rise up against an empire; what led the greatest of generations to free a continent and heal a nation; what led young women and young men to sit at lunch counters and brave fire hoses and march through Selma and Montgomery for freedom's cause. Hope—hope is what led me here today.

The civil-rights struggle is deftly recast in terms not of national guilt but of national progress: the rise of the Joshua generation. What the African-American left once referred to as the "black freedom struggle" becomes, in Obama's terms, an American freedom struggle. African-Americans watched Obama's victory speech in Des Moines with a sense of wonder. Obama proved that he had a chance, and the black vote started to migrate steadily in his direction. A coalition in the Democratic Party, between antiwar whites and blacks—perhaps something even wider than that—was now conceivable.

"Iowa was amazing and I was there," Cliff Kelly, a host on WVON, Chicago's leading black talk-radio station, said, laughing. "When Barack came out onstage with his wife and two gorgeous daughters, all of them looking like they were out of central casting, there were only five black people there in the room. Them and me."

Until that moment, how many African-Americans—how many Americans—allowed themselves to believe that a black President was possible? Had the world really changed that much? Still, some African-American politicians believed that Hillary Clinton's win, five days later, in New Hampshire was proof that Iowa was little more than a freakish victory in a caucus state. In South Carolina, a black state senator, Robert Ford, told a reporter that Obama's chances of getting the nomination were "slim," and if he were to head the Democratic ticket "we'd lose the House and the Senate and the governors and everything. I'm a gambling man. I love Obama, but I'm not going to kill myself." Just three days before the vote, a Mason-Dixon poll indicated that, in the race against Clinton and John Edwards, Obama would get only ten per cent of the white vote.

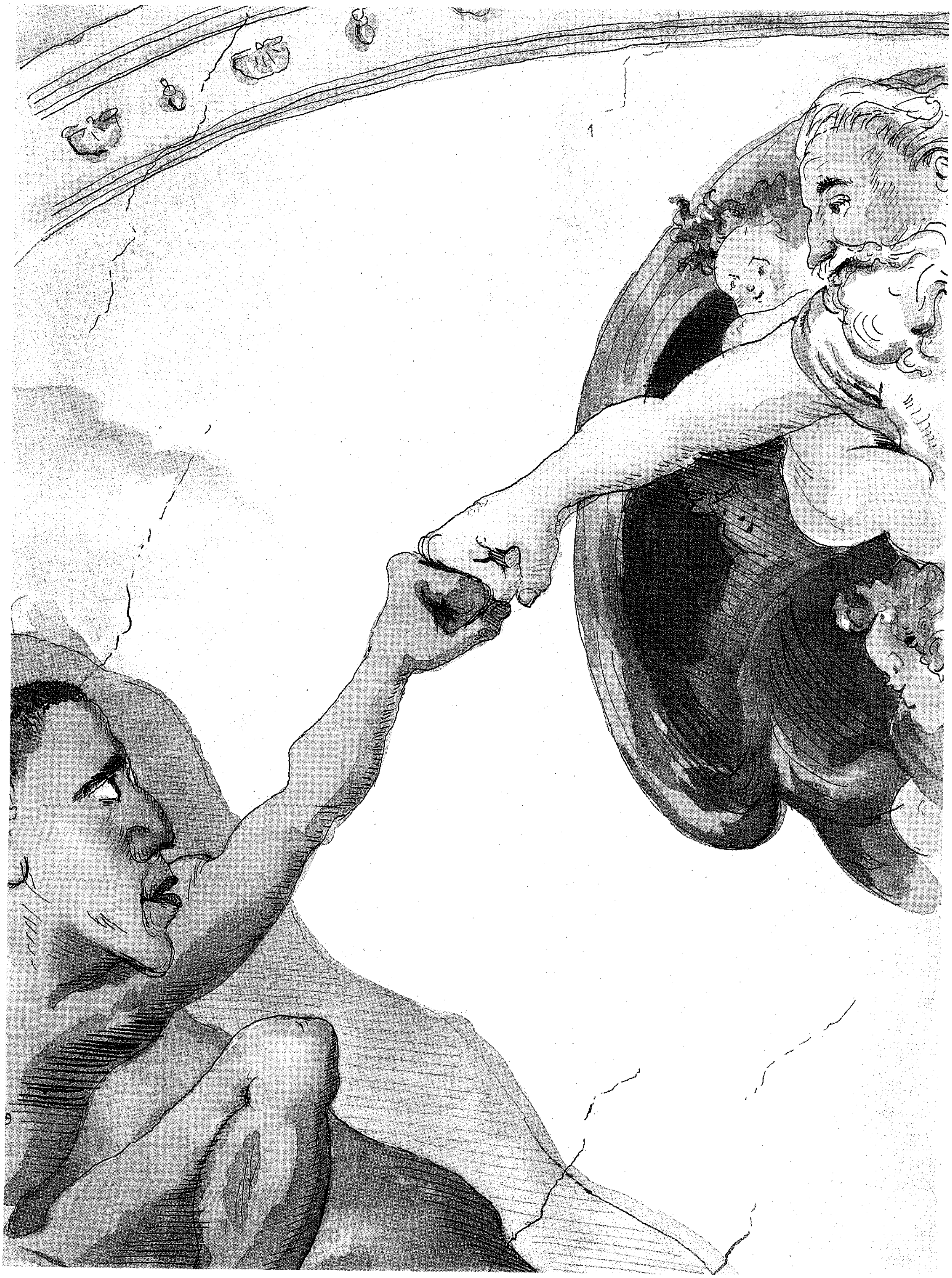
Obama won overwhelmingly in South Carolina, taking about a quarter of the white vote and nearly all the black vote. African-American leaders started to reconsider their loyalties as their constituencies abandoned the Clintons. Compounding the trend, Bill Clinton offended some blacks by suggesting that Obama's victory in South Carolina was like Jesse Jackson's. "I had an executive session with myself," John Lewis recalled. He phoned Bill and Hillary Clinton to tell them that he loved them but now he was going with Barack Obama. "I realized that I was on the wrong side of history," he said.

5

Don Rose, a Chicago political strategist who is close to David Axelrod, is sure that the Obama campaign intended to deal with race the way his client Jane Byrne dealt with gender in her campaign for mayor, in 1979. "We never once said anything about her being a woman," Rose said. "I had her dress as plainly as possible. She had bad hair, which had been dyed and dried over a lifetime, and she sometimes had it fixed twice a day. We had her wear a dowdy wig to look as plain as possible. We discouraged feminist organizations from endorsing her. I didn't want the issue of her being a woman to come up in the least. We knew that women who would identify with her, the gender-centric vote, would come our way without anyone raising it. You don't have to highlight what's already obvious."

It was not by accident that Jackson, Sharpton, and other potentially polarizing figures were seen so rarely on platforms with Obama during the campaign. "The rule was: no radioactive blacks," Rose said. "Harold Ford, fine. Jesse Jackson, Jr., fine. But Jesse, Sr., and Al Sharpton, better not." Rose noted that Obama

SKETCHBOOK BY BARRY BLITT



"So you're a Democrat and you've won. How does that make you feel?"

rarely referred directly to his race in his stump speeches. "When Barack came back from Europe and he was using that line about how he didn't look like all the other Presidents on American currency, his numbers went down," Rose said. "He got whacked and the campaign noticed. You don't raise it, that's the axiom, and you let it work. The less said, the better."

Sharpton, for one, says that he understood that Obama was "trying to build a bipartisan, ecumenical coalition" and did not try to force himself on Obama. In fact, when Sharpton first encountered him, Obama was running for the Senate. They met before appearing at a session of the black caucus of the Democratic National Committee and divided up their rhetorical responsibilities. Obama said that he was making a straight policy speech that night, and Sharpton replied, "Tomorrow night, I'll take care of the brothers and sisters."

Once the Presidential campaign accelerated, Obama explicitly addressed the subject of race mainly when it was demanded of him. While he was campaigning at a town meeting in Carson City, Nevada, a woman in her late sixties named Christy Tews told him that she wanted to vote for a Democrat who would win in November.

"Let's get down to brass tacks here," she said. "We have never elected a black man in our country."

"Yes, that's a good point," Obama said, wryly. "I've noticed that."

Then Obama normalized the question, somehow, and thus normalized the prospects of his winning. "Will there be some folks who probably don't vote for me because I'm black?" he said to Tews. "Of course, just like there'd be some people who won't vote for Hillary because she's a woman or wouldn't vote for John Edwards because they don't like his accent. But the question is, can we get a majority of the American people to give us a fair hearing?"

A fair hearing became far more difficult with the release, in March, of videotapes of Jeremiah Wright in full denunciatory mode: "Not God bless America! God damn America!" Over and over they played. The Clinton campaign wondered how its own opposition-research operation had failed to uncover the tapes earlier, when, they told themselves, they could have put a quick end to the Obama campaign.

There was, of course, a context to "God damn America." Like Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, who fought the rise of Jim Crow laws after Reconstruction and told his black parishioners that they had every right to believe that God was a Negro, Wright saw himself as—and Obama understood him to be—an inheritor of the prophetic tradition, not an accommodationist, and hardly a politician. His jeremiads were meant to rouse, to accuse, to shake off dejection. At times, he called on the familiar metaphor of American blacks as modern-day equivalents of the ancient Hebrews, a people marked by terrible suffering and displacement. Wright was part of a tradition well known to millions of churchgoing African-Americans. But that would never be explained adequately on cable television. The campaign knew that voters would hear those videotapes and be encouraged to wonder about Obama's associations and allegiances. Underneath his welcoming demeanor, was he like a cartoon version of Wright, full of condemnation and loyal only to his race? Would he bring the militants to the White House like the executive in "Putney Swope"?

According to Axelrod, Obama had wanted to give a speech about race in Iowa, "but the staff said it seemed like a non sequitur." With the Clinton campaign making good use of the Wright affair, however, Obama had to act. It was plain that damage control, in the form of sound bites and surrogate interviews, would not work. Obama decided to deliver a major address on race, to be called "A More Perfect Union," on March 18th, at the National Constitution Center, in Philadelphia.

For three days, Obama campaigned by day and then dictated and wrote the speech until the early-morning hours. "I slept well, because I knew that Barack knew *exactly* what he wanted to say," Axelrod recalled.

In his speech, Obama began by trying to broaden the country's understanding of the Reverend Wright's activities as pastor of the Trinity United Church of Christ: he was a former marine, he said, who had built a large and passionate ministry that represented "the doctor and the welfare mom, the model student and the former gangbanger." Obama disagreed with Wright's most inflammatory and indefensible remarks, which represented "a profoundly distorted view of this country." In his view, despair, the Biblically unforgivable sin, was at the heart of Wright's mistake. But he refused to condemn him outright:

> I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more dis-

> own him than I can my white grandmother—a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed her by on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe. These people are a part of me. And they are a part of America, this country that I love.

Obama was in the midst of a high-stakes rhetorical balancing act. He empathized not only with his embittered preacher but also with the embittered white workers who have seen "their jobs shipped overseas or their pension dumped after a lifetime of labor" and cannot understand why their children might be bused across town or why a person of color has a leg up through affirmative action "because of an injustice that they themselves never committed." Obama signalled to all sides that he heard them, that he "got it." A white Southerner, even Bill Clinton, could not dare to do that in a speech on race, and Jesse Jackson, whose tradition had been more about the rhetoric of grievances and recompense, never *would.* Obama's ability to negotiate among the sharply disparate perspectives of his fellow-citizens was at the heart of his political success. Perhaps when people speak of Obama's "distance," they mean just this capacity to inhabit different points of view—a mastery that can seem more anthropological than political. Obama allowed that black anger about past and present wrongs was counterproductive; he also pointed to the way that American politics had been shaped since the Nixon era by the exploitation of white anger in the South and elsewhere.

Just as important as the message was the tone of the messenger. Obama's distinctively cool personality continued to serve him and his candidacy. The civil-rights-era activist Bob Moses told me, "His confidence in himself—and his peacefulness with himself—came through in a way that can't be faked. You are under too much pressure to actually adopt a persona. You can't do it under that pressure and not have it blown away. People said he couldn't afford to be the angry black candidate, but the point is that he is not angry. If he were angry, it would have come out." Indeed, in the sixties, Moses, as he led voter-registration drives in Mississippi, was himself known for those same qualities—his intelligence and even temper.

"The speech helped stanch a real frenzy," Axelrod said. "Barack turned a moment of great vulnerability into a moment of triumph. He said, 'I may lose, but I will have done something valuable.' He was utterly calm while everyone was freaking out. He said, 'Either they will accept it or they won't and I won't be President.' It was probably the most important moment of the whole campaign."

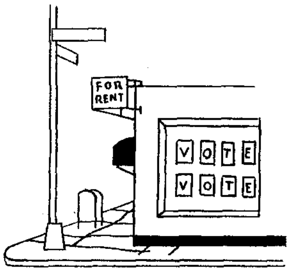
Studs Terkel, who compiled oral histories about race and the Depression and was, at ninety-six, a Chicago institution, spoke to me a week before his death. Terkel said that Obama's political guile under pressure reminded him of Gene Tunney, the heavyweight champion of the mid-nineteen-twenties, who used craft, more than brawn, to defeat Jack Dempsey twice. "The guys on the street, the mechanics and shoe clerks, saw Tunney as an intellectual, but he won," Terkel said. "Obama is like that. He's one cool fighter."

The speech in Philadelphia did more than change the subject. It was daring in its ambition, as it not only contextualized the Reverend Wright—at least, for those who were willing to be persuaded—but also posed Obama himself as the break with history, the focal point of a new era, embracing America itself for all its tribes, for all its historical enmities and possibilities. In effect, it congratulated the country for getting behind him. Wright, Jackson—they were leaders of the old vanguard. Obama would lead the new vanguard, the Joshua generation.

6

Obama has proved to be not only a skilled campaigner but a lucky one—a requirement for victory. In July, good fortune, in the person of Jesse Jackson, handed him an incident that would provide him some useful distance from the past.

According to black leaders who know both men well, Jackson resented that a younger, more moderate politician, a man with no experience of the civil-rights struggle and with an unusual entry into African-American life, was heading toward the office that he had twice failed to reach. That month, Jackson was preparing to appear on Fox television when he was recorded on an open mike criticizing Obama for his "faith-based" comments about the need in some black families for greater personal responsibility. Speaking sotto voce to another guest, Jackson also said that Obama had been "talking down to black people." He made a slicing gesture with his hand and said, "I wanna cut his nuts out."



Obama's talk about responsibility was the kind of thing that black preachers across the country spoke of on Sunday mornings. What seemed to irritate Jackson was the double discourse, the way that Obama's rhetoric was, by design, being overheard by white audiences that might understand it not as brotherly sympathy but, rather, as lofty reproach.

"Barack would go to various groups and spell out public policy," Jackson told me. "He'd go to Latino groups and the conversation would be about the road to citizenship and immigration policy. He'd go to women and talk about women's rights, Roe v. Wade. But he'd gone to several black groups, talking about responsibility, which is an important virtue that should be broadly applied, but, given our crisis, we need government policy, too. African-Americans are No. 1 in voting for him, because he excited people. But we're also No. 1 in infant mortality, No. 1 in shortness of life expectancy, No. 1 in homicide victims."

Fox played the tape on the air, and Jackson had to apologize. This, in turn, allowed Obama to accept the apology. Jackson looked petty and jealous, Obama looked magnanimous.

"I was shocked by the language, but I knew Jesse had the feeling that Obama played to white Americans by criticizing black Americans, for not doing enough to help ourselves," Julian Bond told me. "Whether he intended it, I don't know, but I am sure Jesse provided Obama that sort of Sister Souljah moment."

Even many of Obama's early critics acquired a grudging respect for his strategic sense. The broadcaster and author Tavis Smiley, who has a huge African-American audience, had persistently criticized Obama for "pivoting" on issues like gun control and the death penalty and had warned him against "selling his soul or surrendering his soul" to get elected. And yet, Smiley told me, "Each time Obama and I talked during the campaign, maybe a half-dozen times on the phone, we aired our positions and differences, but it always ended with him saying, 'Tavis, I gotta do what I gotta do and I respect the fact that you have to do what you have to.' We confirm our love for each other and then we hang up." Obama did not represent the prophetic tradition: he was not Frederick Douglass or Bishop Turner, Martin or Malcolm. He was a pragmatist, a politician.

7

In 1995, Colin Powell, after his reputation was burnished by the first Gulf War—and long before his reputation was tarnished by the second—was uniquely positioned to become the first African-American President. His reputation as a soldier and as an adviser to Presidents had been unimpeachable, and his life story, as he described it in his autobiography, "My American Journey," was no less appealing, if less tortured, than Obama's in "Dreams from My Father." Powell put himself forward in the old-fashioned way: the man of accomplishment "who just happens to be black."

For a few weeks, as his book sat atop the best-seller list, Powell discussed a run for the 1996 Republican nomination with his family and his inner circle of aides and friends. Bill Clinton, political tacticians told them, lacked Powell's particular strengths: his maturity, his solidity in foreign affairs; in a center-right country, the scenario went, Powell might beat the incumbent.

"Some in my family, in my circle of acquaintances, were concerned that, as a black person running for office, you're probably at greater personal risk than you might be if you were a white person," Powell told me. "But I've been at risk many times in my life, and I've been shot at, even." Powell thought about the question for a few weeks and then, he said, he realized, "What are you doing? This is not you. It had nothing to do with race. It had to do with who I am, a professional soldier, who really has no instinct or gut passion for political life. The determining factor was I never woke up a single morning saying, 'Gee, I want to go to Iowa.' It was that simple. So the race thing was there, and I would've been the first prominent African-American candidate, but the reality is that the whole family, but especially me, had to look in the mirror and say, 'Is this what you really think you would be good at? And do you really want to do it?' And the answer was no."

Since leaving the Administration of George W. Bush, in 2005, after serving as Secretary of State, Powell has showed his political hand with care, sometimes through background interviews with favored journalists, sometimes through former aides. But in the past year he could hardly avoid mention of the Presidential race. Powell said that he had watched the campaign closely and met with both Obama and John McCain within a week of each other, in June. "I told them the concerns I had with each of their campaigns," Powell recalled, "and I told them what I liked about them. I said, 'I'm going to be watching.' "

Over the summer, Powell saw the campaign unfold and, increasingly, he was dismayed by the ugly rhetoric on the Republican side. "It wasn't just John," Powell said. "Frankly, very often it wasn't John; it was some sheriff in Florida introducing—I can't remember who the guy was introducing, whether it was Governor Palin or John—who said, 'Barack *Hussein* Obama.' That's all code words. I know what he's saying: he's a Muslim, and he's black." Powell chose to accept a standing invitation from Tom Brokaw and, on October 19th, he appeared on "Meet the Press."

"John knew what my concerns were with respect to the Party and with respect to continuing, without much change, the policies of the Administration," Powell said. His endorsement of Obama—precise, eloquent—came as no surprise to McCain. "He knew all of my concerns," Powell said. The endorsement was, for some conservatives, like Kenneth Duberstein, Ronald Reagan's last chief of staff, "the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval."

In the days that followed, the calls, letters, and e-mails that Powell received were mostly positive. The Pakistanis in his local supermarket appreciated what he had to say about the use of "Arab" or "Muslim" as a pejorative. Some critics said that his endorsement of Obama was an act of "disloyalty and dishonor." Rush Limbaugh was only the loudest of the right-wing voices to denounce him. Limbaugh felt no compunction about saying that Powell's only reason for endorsing Obama was race. "The Rush Limbaugh attacks and other attacks from the far right generate a lot of heat but not much light," Powell said. The racist letters he's received are generally unsigned and with no return address. "But I've faced this in just about everything I've ever done in my public life," Powell said. "It's there in America, and it can't be denied that there are people like this."

Powell said that Obama had run a completely new kind of campaign when it came to race. "Shirley [Chisholm] was a wonderful woman, and I admire Jesse [Jackson] and all of my other friends in the black community," he said, "but I think Obama should not be just—well, 'They were black, and he's black, therefore they're his predecessor.'

"Here's the difference in a nutshell, and it's an expression that I've used throughout my career—first black national-security adviser, first black chairman of the Joint Chiefs, first black Secretary of State. What Obama did, he's run as an American who is black, not as a black American. There's a difference. People would say to me, 'Gee, it's great to be the black Secretary of State,' and I would blink and laugh and say, 'Is there a white one somewhere? I am the Secretary of State, who happens to be black.' Make sure you understand where you put that descriptor, because it makes a difference. And I faced that throughout my career. You know, 'You're the best black lieutenant I've ever seen.' 'Thank you very much, sir, but I want to be the best lieutenant you've ever seen, not the best black lieutenant you've ever seen.' Obama has not shrunk from his heritage, his culture, his background, and the fact that he's black, as other blacks have. He ran honestly on the basis of who he is and what he is and his background, which is a fascinating background, but he didn't run just to appeal to black people or to say a black person could do it. He's running as an American."

I asked Powell if Obama's election would signal the rise of a "post-racial" period in American history. "No!" he said. "It just means that we have moved farther along the continuum that the Founding

Fathers laid out for us two hundred and thirty-odd years ago. With each passing year, with each passing generation, with each passing figure, we move closer and closer to what America can be. But, no matter what happens in the case of Senator Obama, there are still a lot of black kids who don't see that dream there for them."

8

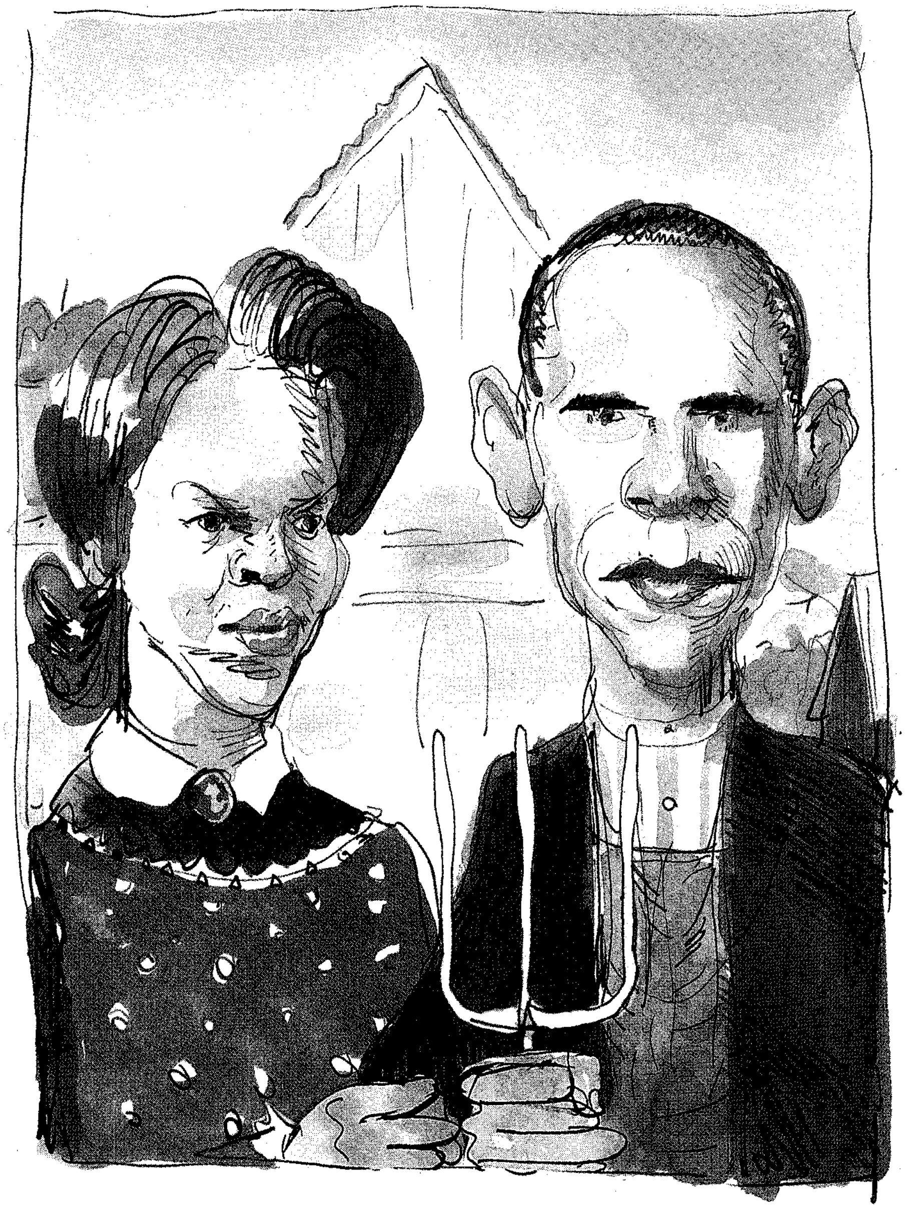
A few weeks before Election Day, as Obama widened his lead over McCain, I visited New Orleans. The last time I was there, the city had been underwater. Since then, Katrina had obliterated what remained of George Bush's reputation and promised to shadow the Presidential race of 2008.

Obama had pledged to run a fifty-state campaign, but even his enormous war chest would not pay for futility. Louisiana is rarely a scene of Presidential campaigning, and the state went for Bush in 2000 and 2004. Nevertheless, African-Americans in New Orleans—in Treme, in Mid-City, in the Lower Ninth—watched Obama's campaign obsessively. They were listening to Tom Joyner, on WYLD; Michael Baisden, on KMEZ; Jamie Foxx, on Sirius. On Canal Street, venders sold the same Obama T-shirts that I'd seen on 125th Street in Harlem. The most popular paired Obama and Martin Luther King. Kids who normally would be wearing oversized throwback sports jerseys wore Obama shirts instead. There were Obama signs in the windows of barbershops, seafood and po'boy joints, and people's homes.

One night, I went out for a beer with Wendell Pierce, a New Orleanian who made his name as an actor playing the homicide cop Bunk Moreland on the HBO series "The Wire." Pierce is in his mid-forties. His parents' neighborhood, Pontchartrain Park, was washed away in Katrina, and he has spent months trying to redevelop the area. Pierce picked me up on Canal Street: he is built like a fireplug and has a double-bass voice. We drove to Bullet's, a working-class bar on A. P. Tureaud Avenue, in the Seventh Ward. There we met Mike Dauphin, a Vietnam veteran, who sat at our table for a long time talking about his childhood in Jim Crow New Orleans, riding in the back of the bus and going to segregated schools and working at American Can and U.S. Steel. When Katrina came, he was sheltered first at a hospice and then, with thousands of others, at the Convention Center, downtown, "where we had almost no water or food for five days." He could hardly wait to vote, and he was talking in the same terms as so many older people around town: "I never dreamed in my lifetime that I would see a black man as President of the United States. I was a kid growing up under Jim Crow. We couldn't drink out of the same water faucet—but now it seems that America has changed."

Yet you also heard from many people a great wariness, a kind of defense against white self-congratulation or the impression that somehow Obama's election would automatically transform the conditions of New Orleans and the country. In Treme, a neighborhood adjacent to the French Quarter and arguably the oldest black community in the country, I met Jerome Smith, a veteran of the Freedom Rides in Alabama and Mississippi. These days, Smith runs youth programs at Treme Community Center. On a sunny fall afternoon, we sat on the steps of a former funeral home on St. Claude Avenue that was now operating as the Backstreet Cultural Museum, an apartment-size collection of artifacts from the black bands that played Mardi Gras and second-line parades.

"Obama winning the Presidency breaks a historical rhythm, but it does not mean everything," Smith said. "His minister did not lie when he said that the controlling power in this country was rich



BARRY BLITT

white men. Rich white men were responsible for slavery. They are responsible for unbreakable levels of poverty for African-Americans. Look at this bailout today, which is all about us bailing out rich white men. And there are thousands of children from this city who have gone missing from New Orleans. Who will speak for them? Obama?

"Obama is the recipient of something, but he did not stand in the Senate after he was elected and say that there is a significant *absence* in this chamber, that he was the only African-American and this is wrong. He is no Martin Luther King, he is no Fannie Lou Hamer"—who helped found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, in 1964. "He is a man who can be accommodated by America, but he is not my hero, because a politician, by nature, has to surrender. Where the problems that afflict African-Americans are concerned, Obama can't go for broke. And the white people—good, decent white people—who voted for him just can't understand. They don't have to walk through the same misery as our children do."

Smith was angry but, as an activist contemplating a mainstream leader, not entirely misguided. It's inevitable that euphoria will fade. The commemorations will fade. And what will remain is a cresting worldwide recession, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a crumbling infrastructure, a rickety, unjust health-care system, melting polar ice caps—to say nothing of the crisis that comes from out of nowhere.

Colin Powell said that, after a prolonged period in which American prestige abroad has dwindled, Obama would have a "honeymoon period," which will give him an opportunity to "move forward on a number of foreign-policy fronts.

"That is also something that will perish or diminish over time, as he faces problems and crises," Powell continued. "If the excitement of the first black President is great, it'll diminish if he doesn't do something about the economy, or the economy worsens, or if we suddenly find ourselves in a crisis. As Joe Biden inarticulately said the other day, 'Something's coming along.' No one knows what it is. . . . The next President will be challenged, and how the President responds to that challenge will be more important than what his race happens to be at that moment. But, for the initial period of an Obama Presidency, there will be an excitement, an electricity around the world that he can use."

9

Forty-nine years ago, a young woman named Charlayne Hunter graduated third in her class from Henry McNeal Turner High School, in those days the most prestigious high school for African-Americans in Atlanta. Charlayne wanted to be a journalist. The University of Georgia had the strongest journalism program in the state, but the university did not accept blacks. Segregation was not something that teen-agers thought to battle in 1959, so Charlayne started making other plans, applying to schools in the Midwest. Yet something was happening in the South: sparked by incidents like Rosa Parks's historic refusal in Montgomery and the rise of young preachers like Martin Luther King in Atlanta, a movement was developing. And so, at the urging of some black leaders in town, Charlayne and Turner High School's valedictorian, Hamilton Holmes, challenged segregation at the University of Georgia by sending in applications for admission. Their applications were soon rejected. Then a legal team led by the N.A.A.C.P.'s Constance Baker Motley, and including such young lawyers as Vernon Jordan, championed their case, and, two years later, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes were indeed qualified for admission to the University of Georgia and must be allowed to matriculate without delay. They started school in Athens in the winter of 1961. For months, they heard racist taunts as they walked to class. Charlayne had

EXXON

Behold the amazing artificial arm, a machine
eerily similar to the arm it replaced, machined
to exacting *tolerances*, as its engineers say,
to "the limits of allowable error."
Think of the hand in the glove, the piston
in the cylinder, the cartridge in the chamber
of an arm: a weapon, that is, a firearm,
to say it more primitively, more exactingly,

more ceremonially, and with more appropriate awe.
Behold then the arm from which fire comes, the hand
of a god hurling lightning. Behold the digital trigger, tick of
the finger on the hand separated from its body by the bomb
at the police station, the rifle smoking
just beyond it, as though it might yet shoot again,
the digital tick of the bomb's timer also disembodied now.

Study the artificial arm, its array of hex-
head setscrews, its titanium armatures and axes,
its silicone skins from light pink to dark brown.
Here is this, from the company's catalogue: "The upper
and lower forearm tubes are secured
to a four-position, manually locked elbow mechanism,"
and this, from God himself, having slain the man's family
and saying to Job, *Or hast thou an arm like God*?

And, *Wilt thou also disannul my judgment*?
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?
The nerve, and the lack. Beyond the limits of allowable error,
beyond the art of it, the story of Job, the trajectory
of narrative, the flight of the bearings and nails,

the improvised explosive device; beyond war itself, that honored
aesthetic ever-present evil alive and vile in the story
that is a lie about the truth and the truth, great engineer

help us, of the lie. Consider the ongoing
problem of tactile sensitivity, the elusiveness
of feeling, those of us otherwise untouched touched
for many dollars a gallon. And see the soldier in parade dress
easing with his other, non-silicone fingers a credit card into
and removing it rapidly from the slot
in the pump, and entering through its portal
the world of disembodied money

and the exacting tolerances of the world banking
system: behold this soldier, and know of his doubts
about the surrendering of arms, which is to say not only
the ambiguous tolerances of the Second Amendment
but the limb abandoned in Baghdad;
the soldier who has entered also into the system
of government surveillance—the porn sites,
the blogs, the maimed-in-the-line-of-duty

collectorates, the whiskeys and women, the rehabilitations.
See the soldier who nods and whose left
intact hand extended to your extended right one
confuses you an instant, but who nods again
to relieve you in your awkwardness. And behold them,
your untouched touched hands, as he nestles his man-made
right one over both of yours on his left, feeling,
between his old self and his new, a responsible citizen.

—*Robert Wrigley*

bricks hurled through her windows. But she and Holmes stayed on and they studied and made many friends, and their case became yet another landmark of the civil-rights movement, along with the marches in Selma and Montgomery—and the church bombings and the beatings, and the murders of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King still to come.

Over the past four decades, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, as she has been known for many years, has worked at this magazine, at the *Times*, for PBS, and for NPR, for which she is now a reporter living in Johannesburg. She is sixty-six. When it was becoming clear a few weeks ago that Barack Obama was on his way to winning the Presidency, we had a series of exchanges about the election. Hunter-Gault was especially impressed by the young Senator's calm when the political and personal attacks came; she said that it reminded her of what her own family, and the families of so many activists in the civil-rights movement, had instilled in their children as a code of behavior. "Try as I can, I am unable to separate my civil-rights past from my present as a journalist because both of my lives converge at this moment," she wrote in one note, "because without the movement I wouldn't be where I am today, and neither would Barack Obama. But because of the movement I was not one of those who thought, Not in my lifetime, not least because I had seen and felt the power of young people, with only their convictions as weapons, tear down the walls of the decades-long system of segregation. And for the first time since the movement I saw a new generation of young people fighting in the same way for change that would bring back the idealism that fuelled our struggles in the streets." Her sense of triumph, though, was not without anxiety. "Anyone who lived through the civil-rights movement with the threats we were exposed to (in my case, mobs outside my otherwise all-white dormitory shouting 'Kill the nigger'), and with the losses we suffered—Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and then the ultimate loss, our leader, Martin Luther King—and now to hear reports of people in Republican audiences responding to political attacks on Obama with words like 'Kill him': we would be living on another planet not to worry for the young husband, father, and new President of the United States. But, like King, who warned us that 'I may not be there with you,' we have to know that we cannot be prisoners of our fears."

Just a few minutes before eleven last Tuesday night, when Barack and Michelle Obama and their daughters walked out on the stage at Grant Park, and everyone around was screaming, chanting, and waving flags, the long campaign came to an end. Joy was in the faces of the people all around me, there was crying and shouting, but Obama seemed to bear a certain gravity, his voice infused not with jubilation but with a sense of the historical moment.

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," he began.

Obama had done it one last time. Having cast himself in Selma twenty months ago as one who stood on the "shoulders of giants," as the leader of the Joshua generation, he hardly had to mention race. It was the thing always present, the thing so rarely named. He had simultaneously celebrated identity and pushed it into the background. "Change has come to America," Obama declared, and everyone in a park remembered until now as the place where, forty summers ago, police did outrageous battle with antiwar protesters knew what change had come, and that—how long? *too* long—it was about damned time. ♦

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David Remnick takes readers' questions.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE NEW LIBERALISM

How the economic crisis can help Obama redefine the Democrats.

BY GEORGE PACKER

In September, 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Democratic nominee for President, was asked by a reporter for his view of the job that he was seeking. "The Presidency is not merely an administrative office," Roosevelt said. "That's the least of it. It is more than an engineering job, efficient or inefficient. It is preëminently a place of moral leadership. All our great Presidents were leaders of thought at times when certain historic ideas in the life of the nation had to be clarified." He went down the list of what we would now call transformative Presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson. (He also included Grover Cleveland, who hasn't aged as well.) Then Roosevelt asked, "Isn't that what the office is, a superb opportunity for reapplying—applying in new conditions—the simple rules of human conduct we always go back to? I stress the modern application, because we are always moving on; the technical and economic environment changes, and never so quickly as now. Without leadership alert and sensitive to change, we are bogged up or lose our way, as we have lost it in the past decade."

When the reporter pressed Roosevelt to offer a vision of his own historical opportunity, he gave two answers. First, he said, America needed "someone whose interests are not special but general, someone who can understand and treat the country as a whole. For as much as anything it needs to be reaffirmed at this juncture that the United States is one organic entity, that no interest, no class, no section, is either separate or supreme above the interests of all." But Roosevelt didn't limit himself to the benign self-portrait of a unifying President. "Moral leadership" had a philosophical component: he was, he said, "a liberal." The election of 1932 arrived at one of those recurring moments when "the general problems of civilization change in such a way that new difficulties of adjustment are presented to government." As opposed to a conservative or a radical, Roosevelt concluded, a liberal "recognizes the need of new machinery" but also "works to control the processes of change, to the end that the break with the old pattern may not be too violent."

That November, Roosevelt defeated President Herbert Hoover in a landslide. His election ended an age of conservative Republican rule, created a Democratic coalition that endured for the next four decades, and fundamentally changed the American idea of the relationship between citizen and state. On March 4, 1933, Roosevelt was inaugurated under a bleak sky, at the darkest hour of the Great Depression, with banks across the country failing, hundreds of thousands of homes and farms foreclosed, and a quarter of Americans out of work.

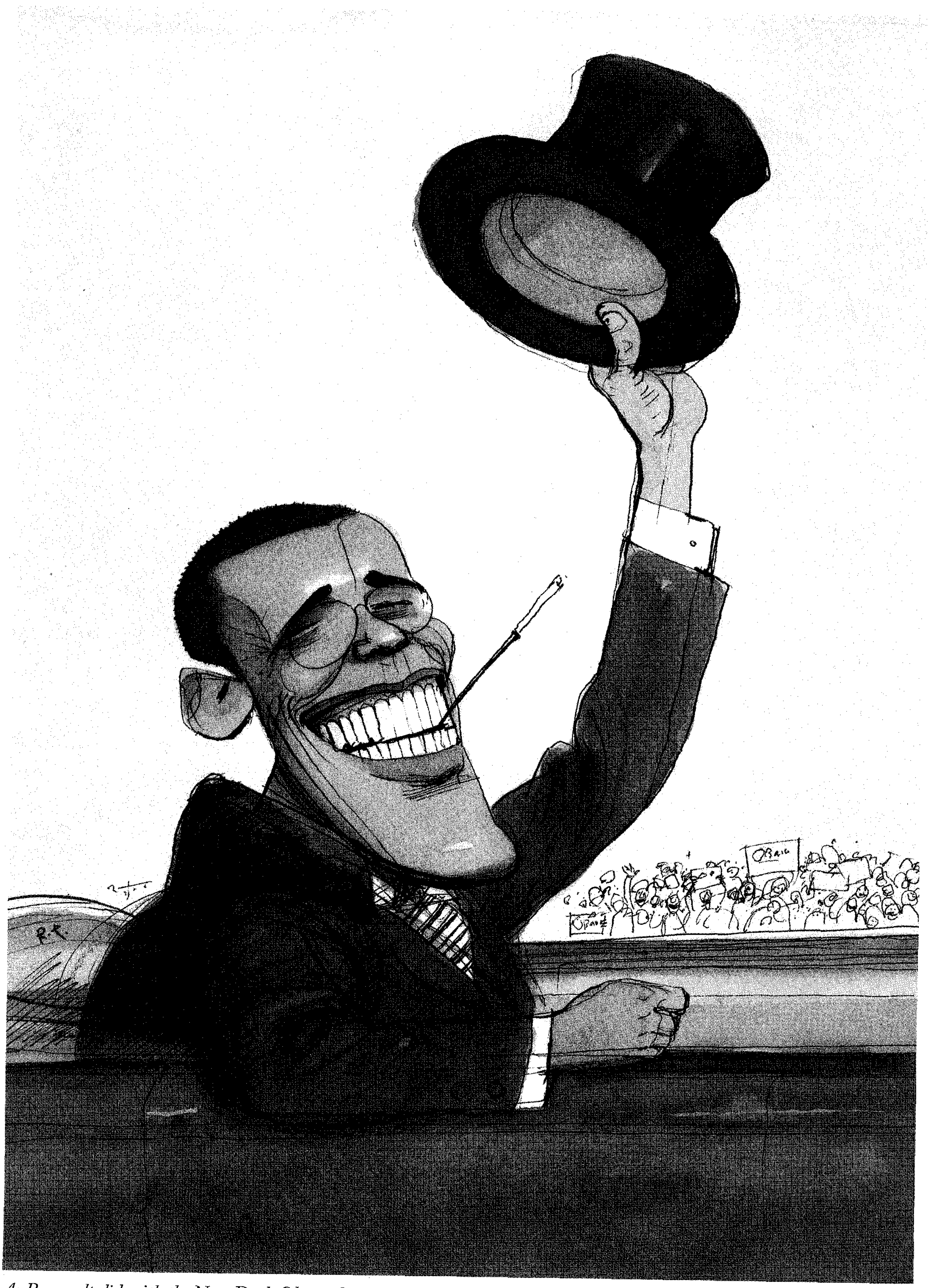
In defining his idea of the Presidency, Roosevelt had left himself considerable room for maneuvering. His campaign slogan of a "new deal" promised change, but to different observers this meant wildly different things, from a planned economy to a balanced budget. "Roosevelt arrived in Washington with no firm commitments, apart from his promise to 'try something,' " the *Times* editorialist Adam Cohen writes in his forthcoming book, "Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America." "At a time when Americans were drawn to ideologies of all sorts, he was not wedded to any overarching theory."

Barack Obama's decisive defeat of John McCain is the most important victory of a Democratic candidate since 1932. It brings to a close another conservative era, one that rose amid the ashes of the New Deal coalition in the late sixties, consolidated its power with the election of Ronald Reagan, in 1980, and immolated itself during the Presidency of George W. Bush. Obama will enter the White House at a moment of economic crisis worse than anything the nation has seen since the Great Depression; the old assumptions of free-market fundamentalism have, like a charlatan's incantations, failed to work, and the need for some "new machinery" is painfully obvious. But what philosophy of government will characterize it?

The answer was given three days before the election by a soldier and memoirist of the Reagan revolution, Peggy Noonan, who wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Something new is happening in America. It is the imminent arrival of a new liberal moment." The *Journal's* editorial page anticipated with dread "one of the most profound political and ideological shifts in U.S. history. Liberals would dominate the entire government in a way they haven't since 1965, or 1933. In other words, the election would mark the restoration of the activist government that fell out of public favor in the 1970s." The *Journal's* nightmare scenario of America under President Obama and a Democratic Congress included health care for all, a green revolution, expanded voting rights, due process for terror suspects, more powerful unions, financial regulation, and a shift of the tax burden upward. (If the editorial had had more space, full employment and the conquest of disease might have made the list.)

For the first time since the Johnson Administration, the idea that government should take bold action to create equal opportunity for all citizens doesn't have to explain itself in a defensive mumble. That idea is ascendant in 2008 because it answers the times. These political circumstances, even more than the election of the first black American to the highest office, make Obama's victory historic. Whether his Presidency will be transformative, in the manner of Roosevelt and the handful of predecessors named by F.D.R. in 1932, will depend, in part, on history—it's unclear whether today's financial troubles will offer a political challenge, and an opportunity, of the magnitude of the Great Depression. But the power of Obama's Presidency will ultimately hinge on how

RICHARD THOMPSON



As Roosevelt did with the New Deal, Obama has represented different versions of moral leadership to different groups of voters.

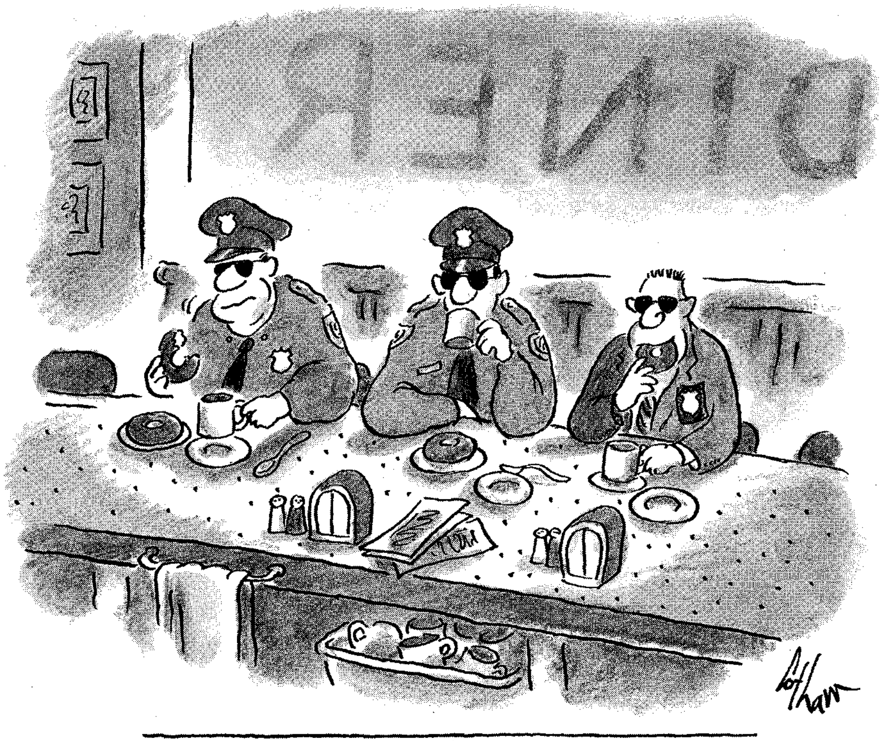
he chooses to interpret the "modern application" of liberalism in the twenty-first century.

During the two years that he spent campaigning for the Presidency, amid relentless media scrutiny, Obama made a greater commitment to specific plans than Roosevelt did. Yet he, too, represented different versions of moral leadership to different groups of voters, at various stages of the campaign. Roosevelt's answer to his interviewer reflected a belief that the Presidency has both a political role and a philosophical role. Obama, using the language of the modern age, has reflected Roosevelt's belief: there is the "post-partisan" Obama and the "progressive" Obama. Some tension exists between these two approaches, but he will have to reconcile them if he is to fulfill his ambition of bringing profound change to the country.

Ask yourself what thinkers and ideas Reagan took with him to the White House and the answer comes pretty quickly: Milton Friedman, George Gilder, supply-side economics, anti-Communism. Bill Clinton's Presidency was ushered in by a shelf of books and papers under the not entirely convincing rubric of the Third Way, espoused by policy wonks called New Democrats. I recently asked a number of people who know Obama, both within and outside the campaign, to name a few books and ideas that will help shape his Presidency. None of them could give me an answer. It's strangely difficult to identify what the intellectual influences on this cerebral and literary politician have been.

David Axelrod, the chief strategist behind Obama's victory, described Obama's influences as "very eclectic." He went on, "He's a guy who reads very widely—he reads opinion on the right and left, and scholarly treatises of the right or left. I don't think he's in the left-wing or right-wing book club. I think he's willing to draw from everywhere." Unlike Reagan, Obama has no clear, simple ideology. People who have observed him in meetings describe a politician who solicits advice and information from a variety of sources, puts a high value on empirical evidence, and has the self-assurance to reach his own conclusions. A word that comes up again and again, from Obama himself and from people who know him, is "pragmatic."

Cass Sunstein, the Harvard law professor and author, was Obama's colleague for many years at the University of Chicago Law School. Sunstein's most recent book, "Nudge," co-written with the behavioral economist Richard Thaler, tries to find a new path between governmental control and the unfettered free market. "Nudge," Sunstein said, is about "ways of helping people to make better choices without requiring anybody to do anything. It's a conception of government that is reluctant to impose mandates and bans but is kind of shrewd about enlisting what we know about human behavior in good directions." Sunstein added that the book is well known in Obama's circle; Obama's top economic adviser, Austan Goolsbee, also of the University of Chicago, has read it, and Sunstein has discussed its ideas with Obama. In "The Audacity of Hope," Obama included a proposal from Sunstein and Thaler that would have employees automatically enrolled in retirement plans, with the option not to participate, because "evidence shows that by changing the default rule, employee participation rates go up dramatically"—a non-coercive "nudge" toward better decisions. "He knows an astonishing amount about cutting-edge economic thinking," Sunstein said.



Very Early in the Investigation

Sunstein's Obama is the post-partisan one. He calls Obama a "visionary minimalist," meaning someone who wants to pursue large goals in a way that offends the deepest values of as few people as possible. Governing in this way would make him distinctly un-Rooseveltian. F.D.R. entered office with broad good will and a platform that offered almost all things to all people, but by the time he ran for reëlection in 1936 his Presidency had become aggressively partisan: he attacked "economic royalists" and said of them, "They are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred." In 2007, Paul Krugman, the *Times* columnist who recently won the Nobel Prize in Economics, commended these remarks to Obama, advising him to sharpen his ideological edge, and warning that his search for common ground with Republicans would be his undoing. But Sunstein said of Obama, "I think he believes—and this is his big split from Krugman—that if you take on board people's deepest commitments, or bracket them, show respect for them, then you make possible larger steps than would otherwise be imagined." It would not be Obama's way to trumpet the arrival of a new era of liberalism—a word, Sunstein said, that is too laden with baggage, and too much of a fighting word, for Obama's taste.

Instead, Sunstein suggested as the governing philosophy of an Obama Presidency the idea of "deliberative democracy." The phrase appears in "The Audacity of Hope," where it denotes a conversation among adults who listen to one another, who attempt to persuade one another by means of argument and evidence, and who remain open to the possibility that they could be wrong. Sunstein pointed out that "deliberative democracy" has certain "preconditions": "It requires an educated citizenry, a virtuous and engaged citizenry that has sufficient resources—and Madison sometimes spoke in these terms—that they could actually be citizens, rather than subjects." Obama links the concept with Lincoln, who was as consequential a President as Roosevelt but in ways that were less obviously partisan and ideological. In his first inaugural, just five weeks before Southern militiamen fired on Fort Sumter, Lincoln urged his countrymen, "Think calmly and *well*, upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to *hurry* any of you, in hot haste, to a step which you would never take *deliberately*, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it."

"The Audacity of Hope," written during Obama's first year in the Senate, with the clear aim of laying the groundwork for his Presidential candidacy, has been criticized for burying the more revealing voice of his memoir "Dreams from My Father" under a politician's blizzard of evenhanded, unobjectionable judgments. But, as campaign books go, it's a good deal more fluent and thoughtful than the genre requires. In it, Obama, who was born in 1961, presents himself as someone young enough not to be defined by the terms and battles of the sixties. His political consciousness was shaped in the eighties, and he opposed Reagan's agenda while nonetheless understanding its appeal, given the failure of liberal government to come through for the middle class. Unlike the Clintons—iconic baby boomers—Obama claims to have no dog in the culture wars; he doesn't feel compelled to defend, or mend, or end every piece of legislation passed when he was a toddler or decades before his birth. In "Hope," he writes, "These efforts seem exhausted, a constant game of defense, bereft of the energy and new ideas needed to address the changing circumstances of globalization or a stubbornly isolated inner city." Obama found his national voice at the 2004 Democratic Convention, in Boston, when his keynote address auguring the end of red-and-blue-state America made him an immediate Presidential prospect.

After he declared his candidacy, in early 2007, the Obama who dominated his first year of campaigning was the post-partisan one. He won legions of followers through the sheer power of inspiration. At Dartmouth College in early January, on the night before the New Hampshire primary, a group of students expressed to me deep disenchantment with the Bush and the Clinton dynasties—the boomer War of the Roses. "Obama is the anti-Bush who could get us beyond Bush and all the polarization in Washington," one student said. Another put it this way: "He's one of us." The post-partisan Obama brought millions of young voters into his movement, and he began to peel away moderate Republicans who were sick of their party's being defined by Dick Cheney's autocratic style of governance and Karl Rove's cynical political tactics.

The real problem with partisanship, Obama believes, is that it's no longer pragmatic. After decades of bruising fights in Washington, it has become incompatible with effective government. "I believe any attempt by Democrats to pursue a more sharply partisan and ideological strategy misapprehends the moment we're in," he writes in "Hope." "I am convinced that whenever we exaggerate or demonize, oversimplify or overstate our case, we lose. Whenever we dumb down the political debate, we lose. For it's precisely the pursuit of ideological purity, the rigid orthodoxy and the sheer predictability of our current political debate, that keeps us from finding new ways to meet the challenges we face as a country." Partisan politics, defined merely as demagoguery or stupidity, is easy to reject—but doing so doesn't take us very far. It's like calling on everyone to be decent. At its weakest, post-partisanship amounts to an aversion to fighting, a trait that some people who know Obama see in him. In the early months of the primary, Obama seemed almost physically to shrink from confrontation, and Hillary Clinton got the better of him in debate after debate.

Just before the Iowa caucus, Sidney Blumenthal, a friend and an adviser to both Bill and Hillary Clinton, told me, "It's not a question of transcending partisanship. It's a question of *fulfilling* it. If we can win and govern well while handling multiple crises at the same time and the Congress, then we can move the country out of this Republican era and into a progressive Democratic era, for a long period of time." Blumenthal found Obama's approach to be "ahistorical"—a simple hope that the past could be waved away. Should Obama win the nomination, members of the Clinton campaign cautioned, he would have no idea what was in store for him. At a Clinton event in Hampton, New Hampshire, a seventy-one-year-old woman named Ruth Keene told me that "the Republicans would chew Obama up."

They tried like hell. They called him an élitist, a radical, a socialist, a Marxist, a Muslim, an Arab, an appeaser, a danger to the republic, a threat to small children, a friend of terrorists, an enemy of Israel, a vote thief, a non-citizen, an anti-American, and a celebrity. Obama didn't defeat the Republicans simply by rising above partisanship, although his dignified manner served as a continual rebuke to his enemies and went a long way toward reassuring skeptical voters who weren't members of the cult of "Yes We Can." It turned out that the culture war, in spite of Sarah Palin's manic gunplay, was largely over. Obama won because he had a vastly superior organization, a steely resilience that became more evident in October than it was in January (for which he owes a debt to Hillary Clinton), and a willingness to fight back on ground on which the majority of Americans—looking to government for solutions—now stand.

According to David Axelrod, among the books that Obama has read recently is "Unequal Democracy," by the Princeton political scientist Larry M. Bartels. It attributes the steep economic inequality of our time not to blind technological and market forces but to specific Republican policies. Bartels writes, "On

WHOLE BOOZE

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average, the real incomes of middle-class families have grown twice as fast under Democrats as they have under Republicans, while the real incomes of working poor families have grown *six times* as fast under Democrats as they have under Republicans." For decades, rising inequality coincided with conservative electoral success, because voters were largely ignorant of the effects of tax-code changes and other economic policies, those in power were unresponsive to the concerns of working-class citizens, and broader income growth occurred in election years. In other words, the causes of inequality are essentially political—an insight that suggests that Obama might use economic policy to begin reversing a decades-long trend.

"Unequal Democracy" is decidedly a title from the left-wing book club, and it suits a candidate whose language became more ideological in the days after the markets crashed, in mid-September. Obama began to refer to the financial meltdown as "the final verdict" on a "failed economic philosophy"—words that one of his advisers called "the key line in the campaign narrative." Another adviser told me that, in the final months of the race, economic conditions pushed Obama to the left. "Barack is a progressive person but also cautious," the adviser wrote in an e-mail. "He understands politics and understands the limits it can create on progressive policy. But as the times have moved, he's moved quickly along with them." Early on, during the more vaporous and messianic phase of his candidacy, Obama took more cautious stands than Hillary Clinton did, but this fall he began to embrace some of Clinton's positions that he had once refused to support, such as a moratorium on foreclosures and a government buyout of mortgages.

Obama was able to make a powerful case for a break with conservative economics, in part, because he doesn't carry the scars of recent history. "He's not intimidated by the issue frames that have bedevilled Democrats for the last couple of decades," one of the advisers said. "There's never been a sense of having to triangulate." By the end of the campaign, Obama wasn't just running against broken politics, or even against the Bush Presidency. He had the anti-government philosophy of the entire Age of Reagan in his sights.

So events in the homestretch crystallized Obama's economic liberalism. But anyone who has read "The Audacity of Hope" already knew that Obama is no moderate when it comes to the purpose of government. On social and legal issues—guns, abortion, the death penalty, same-sex marriage, the courts and the Constitution—Obama's instinct is usually to soften the left-right clash by reconciling opposites or by escaping them altogether, to find what he called, discussing abortion in his final debate with McCain, "common ground." The phrase is a perfect expression of what Sunstein says is Obama's determination to accommodate disagreement to the extent possible. On issues of culture and law, Obama's liberalism is more procedural than substantive: his most fervent belief is in rules and in standards of serious debate. Given the abuses of executive power and political discourse under George W. Bush, this trait will bring no insignificant cleansing. But Obama's personal caution and conservatism, his sense of rectitude, as well as his idea of politics as a mature calling, shouldn't be mistaken for split-the-difference centrism on every issue. On questions of social welfare—jobs, income, health care, energy—which don't immediately provoke a battle over irreconcilable values, he has given every indication of favoring activist government. When I asked Axelrod if the conservative era had just ended, he said, "From the standpoint of values, I wouldn't say that. But, from the standpoint of economics, yes—American history runs in epochs like this." He added, "That's what the theory of our race was—that this is one of those periods of change we encounter every once in a while in our history."

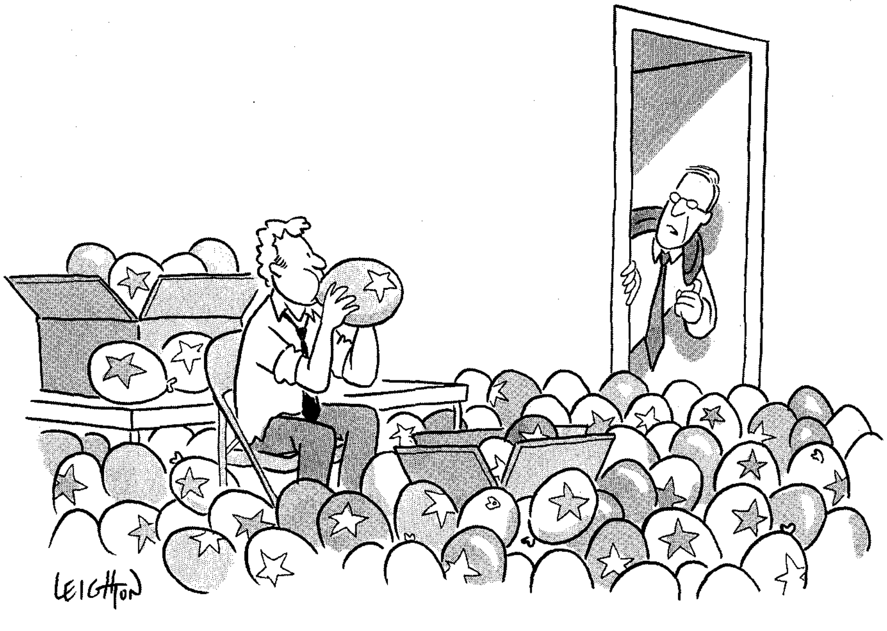
A chapter in "The Audacity of Hope" titled "Opportunity" describes why "the social compact F.D.R. helped construct is beginning to crumble," and begins to sketch a new social compact for a new century. Obama makes a point of incorporating some of the insights of the Reagan era—such as the importance of market incentives and efficiency—but his conclusion, which is unmistakably Rooseveltian, is a call for the renewal of "widespread economic security." Similarly, in a speech on the economy at New York's Cooper Union, last March, Obama said, "I do not believe that government should stand in the way of innovation or turn back the clock to an older era of regulation. But I do believe that government has a role to play in advancing our common prosperity, by providing stable macroeconomic and financial conditions for sustained growth, by demanding transparency, and by insuring fair competition in the marketplace. Our history should give us confidence that we don't have to choose between an oppressive government-run economy and a chaotic and unforgiving capitalism." Since then, Obama has made it even more clear that he wants to lay the ghost of Reagan to rest.

In September, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, in Boston, held a forum on Presidential leadership. Cass Sunstein was one of the participants; another was Robert Kuttner, the co-founder of *The American Prospect* and a liberal economics journalist. The two argued over what it would take for Obama to be a great President. In Kuttner's view, nothing short of a return to New Deal-style government intervention will be enough to prevent the dire economy from dooming Obama's Presidency. This summer, Kuttner published a short book titled "Obama's Challenge," which he described to me as "an open letter" to the candidate. "Obama will need to be a more radical president than he was a presidential candidate," Kuttner writes. "Obama, in his books and speeches, has been almost obsessed with the idea that people are sick of partisan bickering. Yet he also has claimed the identity of a resolute progressive. Can he be both? History suggests that it is possible both to govern as a radical reformer *and* to be a unifier, and thereby move the political center to the left." According to Kuttner, the next President must be willing to spend at least six hundred billion dollars—a Keynesian outpouring—on public works, health care, energy independence, unemployment benefits, mortgage refinancing, aid to state and local governments, and other programs. Otherwise, the country will slide into a depression that will rival the one Roosevelt inherited. (When I ran the six-hundred-billion figure by Paul Krugman, he agreed.)

"Sunstein's minimalism is exactly what's *not* called for," Kuttner told me, and he later added, "We're on the verge of Great Depression Two. All bets are off. The people who *talk* about post-liberal, post-ideological, they have been completely overtaken by events. It's the same abuses, the same scenario, that led to the crash of '29. It's the same dynamics of the financial economy dragging down the real economy—these are enduring lessons. Everybody who was talking about being in a kind of post-liberal world, they're the ones who don't have much purchase on what's going on. The question is whether Obama will come to this." The answer will depend in part on the advisers he chooses. In Kuttner's mind, the deficit hawks and deregulators of the Clinton Administration—Robert Rubin, Lawrence Summers—have been discredited by the financial crisis, and he thinks that it would be a big mistake for Obama to give them powerful roles in his Administration. (Summers is considered a likely candidate for Treasury Secretary, and his top economic advisers are connected with the Hamilton Project, a center-left affiliate of the Brookings Institution.) But, beyond macroeconomics, Kuttner, who plans to hold a conference in Washington called "Thinking Big," shortly before Obama's Inauguration, thinks that the Democrats have a clear political agenda: "the reclamation of an ideology."

This is not an ambition that Obama has ever publicly embraced. In "The Audacity of Hope," he specifically rejects such talk. "That's not Obama," Robert B. Reich, who was Bill Clinton's first Labor Secretary and now teaches at the University of California at Berkeley, said. "Obama is not about the restoration of government as a progressive force per se." He added, "Were Obama to approach this in an ideological way, talking about this as 'We are now going to affirm the importance and centrality of government in the future of the nation,' I think the public would walk away."

Reich, who holds Obama in high regard—he supported his candidacy over that of his old friend Hillary Clinton—bears his share of scars from the Clinton years, many of them inflicted by other members of the Administration. He fought and lost a number of first-term battles against Rubin and other centrists, who persuaded Clinton to balance the budget rather than spend more on public investments. Obama will take office with a number of advantages that were unavailable to the last Democratic President. The Party is more united, the Democrats in Congress energized by their recent return to a majority. As stagnant wages and pressing public needs have become the focus of Democratic domestic policy, the old line between deficit hawks and economic liberals has dissolved—last week, the *Times* published an Op-Ed piece co-written by a leading representative of each group: Rubin and the economist Jared Bernstein, respectively. (They met somewhere around the forty-yard line on Bernstein's half of the field.) Bill Clinton began his Presidency as the country was coming out of a recession, and Alan Greenspan, the semi-divine chairman of the Federal Reserve, could



"You're still in here? Go home. We lost."

hold the new President hostage to Wall Street. Now Greenspan, in retirement, has confessed to Congress that his free-market world view was flawed; Wall Street lies prostrate after suffering something like a paralyzing stroke; and, with the country entering a deep recession, both deficit spending and financial regulation are givens. More profoundly, the conservative tide was still high when Clinton entered the White House, and it quickly swamped him. Obama will take power at its lowest ebb. It is for all these reasons that 2009 will be more like 1933 than like 1993.

Nonetheless, in our conversation Reich kept returning to the many ways in which President Obama's ability to act quickly will be compromised. "We are not in Hundred Days territory," Reich said. "We may be, if the economy goes into free fall—the public may demand dramatic action. But there are so many constraints on dramatic action." New Presidents make mistakes—in Clinton's case, Reich said, they included the push to integrate gays into the military, the botched effort to reform health care, and a failure to establish priorities. Even with a solid majority in Congress, Obama will have to deal with the Blue Dog Democrats, who represent states and districts that are more conservative. Reich recently met with one Blue Dog, in the Southwest, who "felt that it was going to be very difficult politically to make the case" that increasing the deficit during a recession was the right thing to do. On the other hand, unions will likely pressure the Administration to curtail trade agreements, in the interest of preventing the further loss of industrial jobs to other countries.

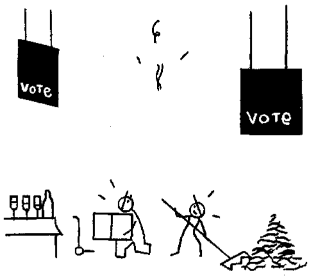
Finally, there will be a Republican opposition. Given the widespread sense of national emergency, David Axelrod said, "I don't know that Republicans can afford to take a laissez-faire kind of approach. I think there are going to be a fair number of Republicans who are going to want to coöperate because they're not going to be on the wrong side of the debate." Kuttner implied that Obama can govern without them. Reich regarded them with the wariness of a crime victim whose assailant is still at large. "They are weaker," he said. "They're not dead by any stretch of the imagination. They're in disarray and discredited, but that's partly because they've not had a clear target, and, undoubtedly, an Obama Administration and a Democratic Congress will give them a very clear target." In Washington, the establishment is already beginning to warn that Obama shouldn't "overreach" by moving too far to the left. But the question isn't whether he tacks left or center; it's whether he demonstrates early on that government can begin to improve people's lives.

The tremendous expectations that will accompany Obama to the White House practically guarantee that some of his supporters will be disappointed by the all-too-normal incapacities of a government founded as a system of checks and balances, and lately choked with lobbyists and corporate money. This disappointment will only feed what Reich called the "deep cynicism in the public about the capacity of government to do anything big and well."

Obama, in order to break through the inherent constraints of Washington, will need, above all, a mobilized public beyond Washington. Transformative Presidents—those who changed the country's sense of itself in some fundamental way—have usually had great social movements supporting and pushing them. Lincoln had the abolitionists, Roosevelt the labor unions, Johnson the civil-rights leaders, Reagan the conservative movement. Clinton didn't have one, and after his election, Reich said, "everyone went home."

Obama has his own grass-roots organization, on the Internet and in hundreds of field offices. This is new territory, because those earlier movements had independent identities apart from any President, whereas Obama's movement didn't exist before his candidacy; its purpose was to get him elected. Even so, it has the breadth, the organization, and the generational energy of other movements, and it can be converted into a political coalition if its leader knows how to harness it.

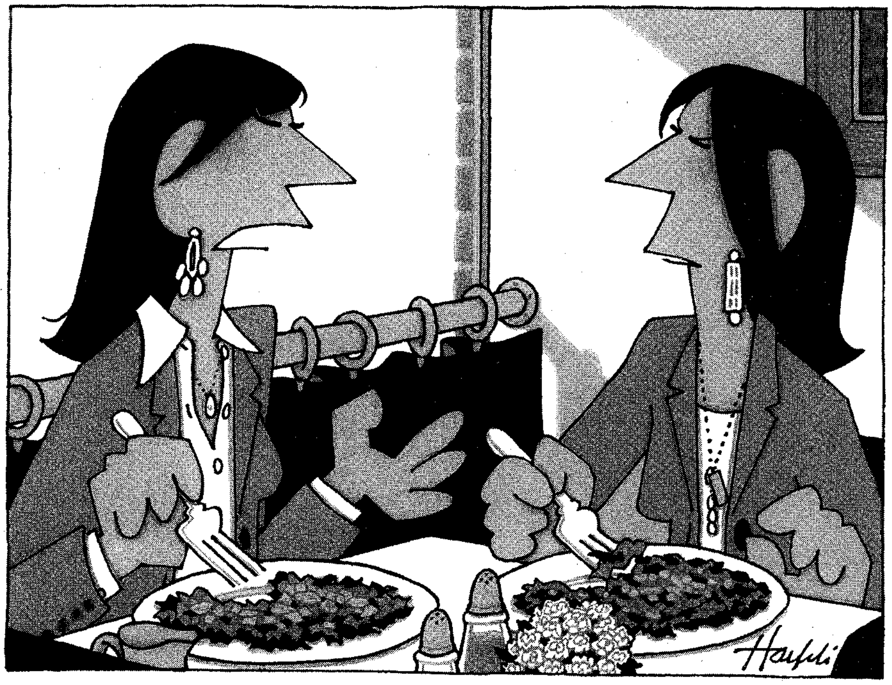
Obama's advisers haven't yet worked out the mechanics of this conversion. The Internet could be used to insure transparency; almost every activity of the federal government could be documented online, as some state governments have begun to do. The White House could use the vast Obama e-mail list to convey information about key issues and bills, and to mobilize pressure on Congress. Just as F.D.R. used radio and Reagan television to speak to the public without going through the press, Obama could do the same with the Web.



It's hard to imagine, though, how an electronic "social-network platform" would constitute a movement with the clarity and the coherence of the religious right, or the freedom marchers, or the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The agenda of Obama's candidacy is a list of issues that have different constituencies rather than a single, overarching struggle for freedom or justice. Throughout the campaign, Obama spoke of change coming from the bottom up rather than from the top down, but every time I heard him tell a crowd, "This has never been about me; it's about you," he seemed to be saying just the opposite. The Obama movement was born in the meeting between a man and a historical moment; if he had died in the middle of the campaign, that movement would have died with him—proof that, whatever passions it has stirred, it remains something less than a durable social force.

With a movement behind him, Obama would have the latitude to begin to overcome the tremendous resistance to change that prevails in Washington. Without one, he will soon find himself simply cutting deals. And here is where the two aspects of his vision of the Presidency—the post-partisan Obama and the progressive Obama—converge. "Changing politics and making government work are complementary, not opposed," Reich said. "Otherwise, it's the same old Washington. It's a morass."

Does "changing politics" mean finding a bipartisan consensus before moving on to major reforms? Or inspiring a new generation of public-spirited activists? Or simply using a language and a tone that reject divisiveness and respect the intelligence of the citizenry? A more idealistic and engaged politics would be a profoundly welcome departure from an age of disenchantment and venom. Consensus seems less likely. As Paul Krugman told me, post-partisan rhetoric will be the means. Solving problems through progressive government will be the end.



"There's no point in our being friends if you won't let me fix you."

• •

Last month, Charlie Rose asked Krugman what he would like to hear from Obama's Inaugural Address. " 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,' " Krugman said. "I want him to call for something like a new New Deal, saying, 'Look, we've gone off the rails. Not everything's been bad these past couple of decades, but we lost sight of having a society that works for everybody, we lost sight of a society that provides some basic security, we lost sight of a society that provides some basic insurance against chaos in the financial markets, and we need to recapture some of those values that have made us successful.' " Krugman didn't say what a "new New Deal" would be.

There is a mysterious cycle in human events, but it doesn't swing back and forth like a pendulum. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., building on his father's work, observed that American politics alternates between thirty-year periods of conservatism and reform—between the idea that we're on our own and the idea that we're all in this together. But the movement of history incorporates everything that went before, always inching ahead even as it oscillates, and anyone who governs as if the experience of entire eras could be reversed is bound to fail. (The Gingrich Congress, driven solely by a desire to dismantle government programs, comes to mind.) "It would be a mistake to surmise that the new era is somehow a return to the New Deal," Axelrod said. "The one theme that I think travels is the notion that there is a role for government to play. It may be just as a catalyst; it may be using the bully pulpit. But I think the progressive idea that government has a role to play in making sure there are rules of the road, that people get a fair shake, and so on—I think that is very much what people are looking for today."

If you dip into the literature of the New Deal, what immediately strikes you is its desperate radicalism. Next January, no one will use the kind of apocalyptic language with which Arthur Krock, of the *Times*, described Roosevelt's Inauguration: "The atmosphere which surrounded the change of government in the United States was comparable to that which might be found in a beleaguered capital in war time." In his Inaugural Address, with the Depression in its fourth year, F.D.R. demanded wartime powers. He took office amid protests by military veterans clamoring for their bonuses, and not long after his Inauguration he came up with the idea of sending many of them, along with a couple of hundred thousand other unemployed men, to clear firebreaks in the country's national parks. After a century and a half of American individualism, his Brain Trust—an advisory group of economists and lawyers—put the government in charge of organizing the economy. Vast programs costing millions of dollars and requiring entirely new agencies took shape overnight while Americans starved to death. Critics, including some Democrats, compared Roosevelt to Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. Demagogues and mobs sprang up around the country, calling for Communism, for Fascism, for old-age pensions. Out of this churn came the mixed economy, and Social Security.

Reagan couldn't cancel Roosevelt's legacy; Obama won't be able to obliterate Reagan's. The past few decades have generated a great surge of private energy and private pursuits, and for some Americans they have been years of dizzying abundance and creativity. Laptop computers and microbrews are just as characteristic of the Age of Reagan as financial derivatives and outsourcing. Next January, legions of earnest, overworked, slightly underfed young men and women won't flock to Washington to map out new government bureaucracies; instead, legions of healthy, casually ironic, extremely nice young men and women will flock to Washington to map out the green revolution. When it comes, it will look more like Google than like the Tennessee Valley Authority.

But November 4, 2008, is one of those infrequent dates when one historical age and one generation, with a distinct political and economic and cultural character, gave way to another age, another generation. The new era that is about to begin under President Obama will be more about public good than about private goods. The meal will be smaller, and have less interesting flavors, but it will be shared more fairly. The great American improvisation called democracy still bends along the curve of history. It has not yet finished astounding the world. ♦

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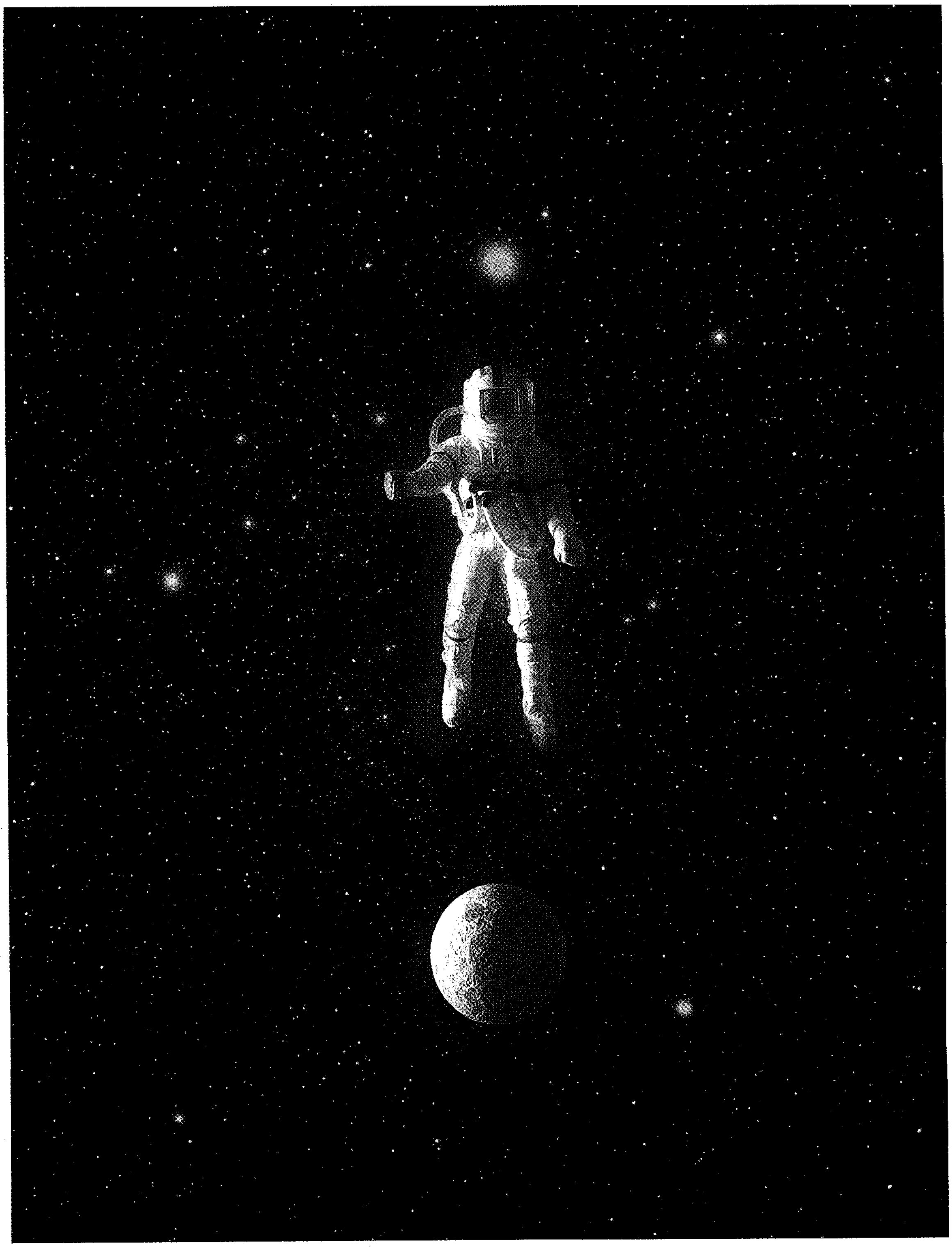
An audio interview with George Packer.

FICTION

LOSTRONAUT

BY JONATHAN LETHEM



November 4th

Dearest Chase,

I am trying to "feel" November, yours and mine. I'll make an imaginary diorama, like something from grade school, an attempt to win a secret science fair of the heart: Janice and Chase's November. A mind's-eye miniature I can peer into. (I won't mention this project to the Captain, or to the Russians, or to anyone else. We all know too much about one another's little projects up here.) Is it cold yet? Is Manhattan beautiful? Have they put up the Christmas tree, or is it too soon? (I know you loathe Rockefeller Center.) Do you ever go to the Chinese garden at the Met, with the tiny gurgling waterfall, where we once went and laid our heads together on a stone and fell asleep? (I don't know if I want to know whether you go there without me or not, so don't answer that question.) Do I sound idiotic? Forgive me, I'm going a little bonkers up here. Since the antifreeze leak—explosion, really—things have not been right. I'm sure Mission Control will have tried to keep any panic to a minimum—that's in their training, and, even more, it's in their nature. (Hello, Ted! And how are you, Arun? Are you sipping Ceylon as you read this?) Even among us six, we've quit discussing the incident—there's always the new day's tasks to think of. But in truth we nearly lost both the Den and the Greenhouse. And, without the Greenhouse, no food. And no air. No us. Northern Lights just an elaborate mausoleum, or perhaps a floating lab for an experiment in zero-gravity mummification.

Mstislav, our most dedicated gardener now that Sledge rarely emerges from the Attic, has been tinkering with the carbon-dioxide balance, a dangerous but crucial sport. At six or seven hundred parts per million, the air in here is dreadful but sustains life. Regular jiggering of organic functions is needed to keep the ratio from ballooning to something deadly. To make a long story short, after an alarmingly high reading Mstislav discovered a mound of rotting mangrove fronds under a seemingly healthy hillock of wheatgrass—a camouflaged nightmare of poison-leaching compost. Endgame for us could be that simple, that foolish. Everyone, even the Captain and Sledge, was required to take up pitchforks in an ad-hoc campaign to clear the fermenting stew into garbage stockings, which then had to be banished from our airspace, pronto. Now, for months Keldysh has been stuffing waste into one of the three emergency modules, a reasonably nifty solution, with the notion that we'll eventually test our ability to launch the module and remote-control-dump its contents at the edge of the minefield that makes up our prison. Maybe our garbage, drifting slowly into Earth's gravity, could even take out some of the low-orbit mines the Chinese launched to keep us trapped here. A fantasy, perhaps. We'd have to eliminate hundreds for Mission Control even to begin to discuss reaching us with a shuttle. But we dream—why not?

Well, this surplus of mulch-bulging stockings forced our hand, before Keldysh had any chance to chart a launch plan. Zamyatin was enraged at Keldysh for attempting the early launch, but we'd all encouraged him. And, in truth, we were all exhausted from twelve hours of what Mstislav laughingly called "serf toil," one of the rare jokes among the Russians that even Sledge and I could get. Also the last laugh we'd have for a while. Keldysh arced the module. It rebounded off solar panel V, snapped off an antenna, and clanged disastrously against the Den's exterior tile. Glued to the video feed like teen-agers at a horror film, we saw the module tumble unbraked through, yes, the Chinese mines. Then flare and vanish. (Honestly, I do think Keldysh by then had his head in his hands, and could have reversed the module's course if he hadn't been so despondent at the earlier impacts.) Farewell to excess compost, to unrecyclable plastic waste, to irredeemably shameful diapers, and to the module itself. The flume of mute fire another reminder, if we needed it, to recalibrate orbital decay daily. Like flossing. (I joke to keep your attention during the dry technical passages, my darling distractible Chase.) I don't think anyone thought to inspect the Den's interior for damage until we smelled the antifreeze, a skunk's reek speeding through Northern Lights' tiny atmosphere.

It was Mstislav who had the foresight to seal the Den remotely, then insist that we don oxygen masks and investigate. Forget for now any damage to the exterior, which we were, of course, predisposed to concern ourselves with. (The rocket ship's hull, every spaceman's concern!) By the time we reached the Den we'd lost Sledge somewhere, but the remaining five of us penetrated the area wearing masks, and discovered the wrecked antifreeze line spewing turquoise blobs, which floated and shattered to paint every surface of the Den's interior. Mstislav and Zamyatin clamped the line. Then, fresh off the serf toil in the Greenhouse, we space janitors set to scrubbing and sponging and wringing the blue goo into containers, a task much like the pursuit of Dr. Seuss's Oobleck. (I still want to have children with you, Chase.) By the finish our uniforms were coated. Mstislav, champion of this episode, reasonably pointed out that any droplet of the pollutant we exported from the Den was destined for circulation and, ultimately, our mucous membranes. Our bloodstreams. So we stripped and trashed the clothes. Picture us, five floating nudists in oxygen masks, ragged with fatigue and degrees of shock, squeezing the last beads of antifreeze from our hair. (Don't be jealous. They've seen me naked before. Anyway, on our present diet I'm shrunken to a ten-year-old's gaunt outline, not exactly turning heads. My periods have stopped, too. And yes, again, I still want to have children with you, Chase.) At last, and ignoring various bruises and scrapes that first-aid protocols would have had us tend immediately, we all slunk away to our various hidey-holes to strap ourselves to a wall for some desperately needed sleep. Starved as we were, I don't think anyone emerged for ten hours or more.

I can't imagine that Mission Control will release too much of this report, except perhaps exclusively to you, Chase. Still, when our media-digest packet finally turns up (there's so much demand for our scrawny bandwidth, so many technical transmissions in line ahead of anything personal, that the packet is usually delayed a week or two), I'm always startled at how many columns the papers devote to us. How fascinating can we truly be? They'll forget us soon. We've practically forgotten ourselves. That's

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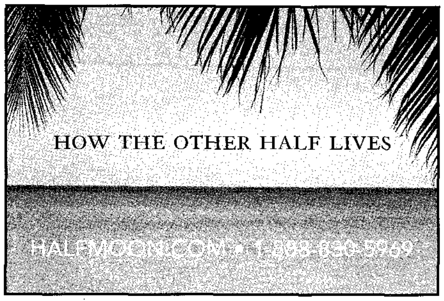

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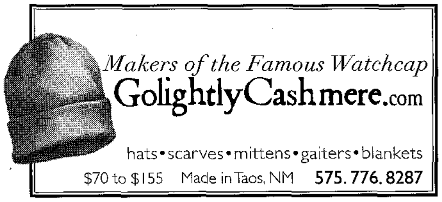

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why I rely on you, Chase, to believe in me. As I drift, you anchor me in reality. On Earth. In Manhattan, where you sit reading this, perhaps in that fake-French coffee shop (is it really called Savoir Faire?) with the amazing almond croissants you pretend to allow yourself only once or twice a month but in truth devour at least twice a week. That's where I picture you, Chase. With powdered sugar on your fingers as you open Mission Control's overnight envelope. The sugar on your lips and fingers and possibly on your nose, too—that sweet dust is me, your astronaut, your lostronaut, your Janice.

November 14th

Dearest Chase,

I've got some good news and some bad news. Ha ha ha ha ha—imagine, please, my convulsive laughter. (I read this opening line aloud to Zamyatin, who happens to be running on a treadmill in the room as I type this letter to you, and he found it as hilarious as I did. Moments like these are all we have to savor these days; please don't begrudge them.) The good news, of course, you will have read in the newspaper and perhaps even seen on some cable-news station (except I can't for one instant imagine you bothering with cable television; last I recall you were searching for your remote and failing to find it, then accusing the housekeeper of hiding it): we survived the space walk to repair the tile damaged in Keldysh's botched module launch. Better than survived. The space walk was a thrilling success and Northern Lights will carry on, to drift unmoored in orbit for another day, or month, or however long until we are rescued or choose to destroy ourselves in a deliberate collision with the Chinese mines, which I suspect could happen any minute now, especially if I am judging the Captain's and Keldysh's moods correctly—but, pardon me, I was telling you the good news! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

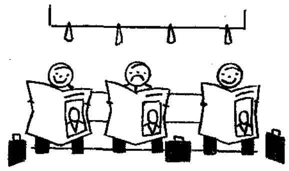
Suffice to say no straws were drawn, because no one wanted to see Sledge anywhere near the air lock; our dour Captain asserted the leadership he has lately so much neglected, tapping myself and Keldysh for the walk, and Mstislav and Zamyatin for on-board mission guidance, and inventing some kind of make-work for Sledge that did or did not get done—something back in the Greenhouse, something to do with Mstislav's doomed reclamation project involving the leaf-cutter bees, those expert pollinators. (We're all in utter denial about the bees.) I find myself unwilling to bother with the technical stuff, which by now I'm certain makes your eyes glaze over. Such labors as the forty-eight hours of preparation that the mission entailed are wearisome enough to get through, let alone describe for a bored boyfriend. Anyhow, "preparation"'s a poor word. Nothing had or could have prepared me and Keldysh for the sensations that overcame us upon ejecting from the air lock. Essentially, of falling, like Wile E. Coyote, off a cliff, into a bottomless well of darkness and silent velocity.

We're soaring atoms, Chase, that's what orbit consists of, the inhuman hastening of infinitesimal specklike bodies through an awesome indifferent void, yet in our cramped homely craft, its rooms named to evoke childhood comforts, with our blobs of toothpaste drifting between our brushes and the mirror, our farts and halitosis filling the chambers with odor, we've defaulted to an illusion of substance. Inside Northern Lights, we've managed to kid ourselves that we exist, that we're curvaceous or lumpy or angular, bristling with hair and snot, taking up a certain amount of room, and that space and time have generously accorded a margin in which we're invited to operate these sizable greedy bodies of ours, a margin in which to dwell, to hang out and live our pale stinky stories. The space walk destroyed all that. (No wonder Mission Control has tried to keep this from ever being necessary.) Oh, the lie of weightlessness! We feel we're floating only because we're forever falling, as in an elevator with no bottom floor to smash into. And so, inside the elevator, the human party continues oblivious, the riders flirt and complain and mix zero-G cocktails, or chase bewildered zero-G leaf-cutter bees. Outside the ship, our consoling elevator's walls dissolved, Keldysh and I were two specks falling forever, specks streaming down the face of the night. Ourselves plummeting downward to the gassy blue orb, the gassy blue orb also plummeting at the same mad rate away from us.

(Somewhere I hear the voices of Mission Control: Ted muttering to Arun, "Get this woman an editor.")

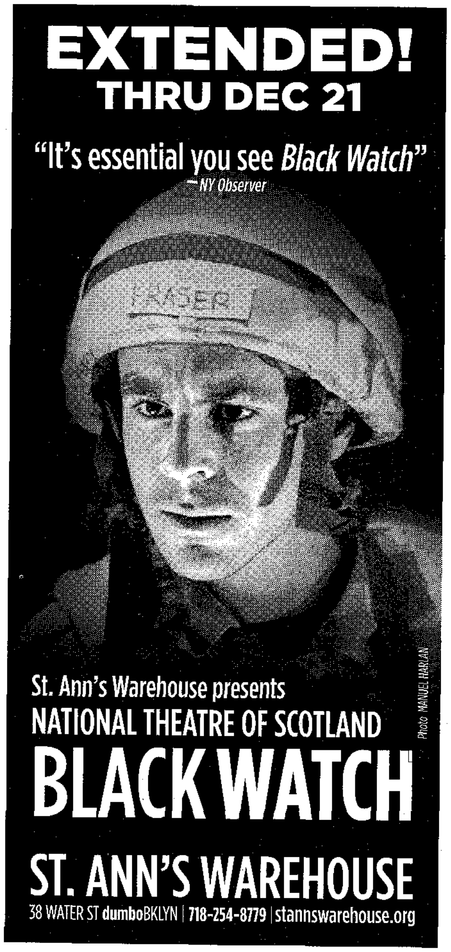
Well, after clinging to our telescopic guide-rods in a riot of metaphysical horror for upward of twenty minutes, our eyes locked on each other's while Zamyatin and Mstislav gently prodded us to explain, please, why we weren't moving a muscle to make the needed repairs to the tile, Keldysh and I completely mute, we finally managed to bluff ourselves into taking one step into the void, and then another, until like brain-locked automatons we began executing the commands we'd rehearsed. The repair required little beyond the clipping of a hangnail of tile and the application of a sealant (think Krazy Glue) to the gash that the misdirected module had carved into the Den's upper sill. One crumpled signal dish was judged to be irretrievable; we detached it and let it spin off, down toward the minefield. I think it got through, the reward being immolation upon reaching the atmosphere—a Roman candle, a small blessing of fire sent down in your direction, my Chaseling. My heroism, such as it was, consisted in persuading poor Keldysh, who, seeing the dish spiral away, reverted to panic and clung to the tile in a bear hug, to free himself from the ship's exterior and let the guide-rod telescope him home to safety. I had to whisper into Keldysh's private channel for five endless minutes, the others all stymied, waiting for us to budge, before I got him to go.

Now, love, for the bad news. A few days after the space walk, Mstislav, in his dutiful way (he's keeping the whole place running!), scheduled checkups for both me and Keldysh, a routine caution we'd neglected for too long. We came up clean for effects from the walk, but Mstislav seemed puzzled by my white-blood-cell profile. We ran a few successive days' counts, just to be sure we had a meaningful sample, Mstislav trying not to say what he feared he was on the trail of, me gamely offering various bogus notions about female physiology reacting differently to the Greenhouse's CO_2 deprivation, joking that Mstislav had gone too long without a lady patient. Eventually, our efforts devolved to a sitdown for the ever-humbling medical questionnaire, Mstislav talking me through a series of self-exams, a drill we'd practiced on the ground but hoped never to see put to use. None of us much like dwelling on the slow erosion of our bodies in this environment—the bone-density decay, the pale, starved skeletons we've substituted for our old selves. I liked even less what Mstislav guided me toward: acknowledgment that I'd been managing an uncanny pain in my right foot's arch for weeks, at least. Do you remember that I said I was having a problem with cramping? That cramp was a tumor, Chase. Funny, huh? Oh, you should have seen the looks on the faces of the Russians, and Sledge. Even Sledge. I think they realized too late that I was a sort of talisman here, their woman. The whole mother-earth thing, unavoidable. Now a good-luck charm with cancer. That's not to say, you know, that we don't all still hate one another.



That was yesterday. I'll know more soon, but I doubt we'll be able to much delay a leak to the media, and I wanted to tell you before you learned by other means. (Oh, this is going to be a mess, this is going to be hell.) Behold the onset of my flinty tone. Along with so much else, a soft-tissue sarcoma can apparently drain the exultation from one's prose.

Remember (please remember) the Chinese garden at the Met, that unlikely bit of outdoors indoors? It shouldn't feel so expansive, yet somehow it does. My favorite place in Manhattan, I think. Remember that we went there together, Chase? Did I already ask this? One of our first days in New York, we were so tired and drunk on sex and the sense of recognition of those early days of our love, and we meandered into the Met, not with any plan, and the suffocating heaviness of those galleries of European oil paintings made us drowsy and we escaped (I never remember the path exactly, always have to rediscover it) to the Chinese garden court, and were nearly alone there, and anyway the gurgling of the water and the rustling of the grasses, the bam-



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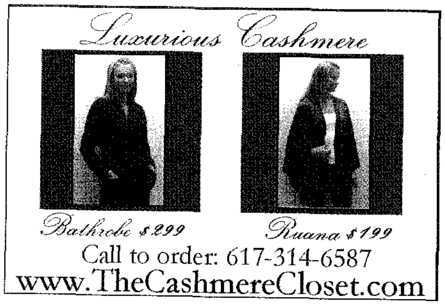

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boo, seemed to cover any human sound, and we lay down there on that stone which had been chiselled out and shipped from its ancient source and no guard troubled us and soon with our heads tipped together on that dark slate we fell coolly asleep, dozed for who knows how long? Do you remember, Chase? I remember, too, when we woke, and turned to look into the pool beside our heads, and you thought you saw a fish, a little black darting goldfish-type fish, but it was only the reflection of my glasses, a black shimmering reflected shape that had separated, for an instant, from the reflection of my head and from the rest of my glasses, and seemed a separate darting thing, a fish, or a tadpole? Please remember, Chase, remember please remember, I adore you, my terrestrial saint, my angel wandering avenues, I'm your cancerous angel adrift,

Janice

December 18th

My darling Chase,

Now comes the winter of my discombobulation. Of course, we have no winter here, it's always cold out and filthy hot sweaty moist oxygenless inside but, hey, I notice the pages flying off the calendar. Santa's loading his sleigh! Hope he gets through the minefield O.K.! We've reverted to believing in Santa, Chase. St. Nick is one of the cultural touchstones up here, something Sledge and I and the Russians can all get behind, whereas E. Bunny and T. Fairy are too American, apparently, and hence are terra incognita. As is, come to think of it, terra! But we believe in mythical things here, like Earth and Santa. After all, we have invisible enemies—CO_2, cancer, gravity. So heck, why not invisible friends?

Each bout of meds is worse than the last. My days ("days") a dull cycle of recovery until I'm strong enough to suck the poison again. During my latest bouts of helplessness I've been installed in the Nursery, which has become a sickroom, with everyone aboard all too adept at tapping one of my veins and inserting an IV, not to mention swabbing my puke from where it's drifted into my hair and so on. I suppose we're enjoying a faint resurgent solidarity, at last obeying Mission Control psychiatric guidelines that we gather for meals and meetings every other day. The Captain is a captain again, his melancholic depression no contest for my cancer—yes, I feel like a winner, Chase. I may have bought a lottery ticket out of here, in fact, and once in a while Keldysh and the Captain can't keep from peering at me with a sympathy that includes a trace of morbid fascination with the strange journey I've managed to undertake within our orbiting stasis, and perhaps even envy for my possible destination. (Mstislav is too devoted an attending physician ever to reveal such a sentiment, and Zamyatin, the angry cosmonaut, too much of a bastard—if Zamyatin were ever to commit suicide, he'd make sure we knew that he credited it to *our* cowardice, not his.) It's almost as if I'd broken a pledge we made to one another and to our audience on Earth: that we'd live here forever, mascots of futility.

Most remarkable of all, though, is the effect on poor Sledge. The dawning signs of this transformation we chalked up to circumstance: with Mstislav now devoting much of his time to my care, the Greenhouse was neglected, worse than usual, I mean, so Sledge began to grope his way out of the Attic back into a share of his old duties, tending the wheatgrass and cabbages and hives as if he'd never abandoned them, and really producing some miraculous results. Sledge is a more instinctive and sympathetic gardener than Mstislav, something we all, perhaps even Sledge, forgot. Without even appearing to try, he's reversed a degree of the CO_2 slide. He's also a better cook. The two roles are intertwined. He offers me broths of freshly harvested sweet-potato greens and baby bok choy, and though the air we breathe in here is itself a kind of broth, I sip them gratefully.

There's more. You'll say he's got some kind of vampiric jones for suffering, but Sledge has become a tender companion in my worst hours, vigilant over my fevers, an entertainer when I can bear entertainment. Whether out of stoicism or hostility, we'd long since quit sharing personal stories up here, but during quiet hours, when all the others are sleeping and the toxins inflaming my veins won't let me rest, Sledge has been disburdening to me tales of collegiate mayhem in the Pacific Northwest, at Evergreen

College. How a pale secret fag (did I just let that slip?) made his way first amid those blustery, sunburned hippie biology majors, then here to patriotic doom with me and the Russians, God only knows. If half the amount of crystal meth and threesomes he claims in his youthful annals are factual, sleepy old Sledge truly belonged in the Warhol Factory. Never underestimate anybody, Chase (I think you often do).

I know, my foolish darling, how you like to root for improbable heroes on unlikely quests, so I'll make you party to a secret. Sledge has been sneaking leaf-cutter bees out of the Greenhouse, one at a time, in a mason jar. It's his wild theory that their stings immunize against cancer, and so once or twice a day, on top of my official poisons, I roll up a pant leg and allow Sledge to bully a bee into injecting its venom into my shin. He then lines up the dead bees on the Nursery's doorjamb, facing outward, their dry little feet affixed with rubber cement so they won't drift. Fifteen or twenty now, keeping vigil while I nod. If any of the Russians have noticed, they've said nothing.

I'm sparing you, sparing us both, my reminiscences, my pining evocations; refusing, this time, to rhapsodize on your appetite for pastry, the slightly ashy skin of your earlobes, any days spent failing to rouse ourselves beyond your bedroom's threshold, or other days wandering through museums, gazing in indoor fountains, startled by the sight of our own innocent faces in rippling pools. None of this. If I beckon you to remember me, Chase, I fear you'll slip to some image of another, for I suspect I'm beginning to dissolve; I can barely remember myself anymore. But I remember you, Chase, I really do. I see you before me, like that mute Greek chorus of bees.

Your lost one,
Janice

January 8th

C.,

Severed-foot disposal in a pocket biosphere is really a daft problem, one I hope you never need face, love. We considered air-lock ejection, a sailor's funeral, but to send my pedal appendage spinning down to Earth, or, worse, to trigger a mine, seemed florid, flamboyant, a bit of a flambé, and not in the least flame-retardant, even if we wrapped it in a foil boot. (Of course, if we had a thousand feet among us, a millipede's supply to lop off and defenestrate, maybe we'd kick our way out of this crate!) The whole prospect just felt a little brutal for a body part, even one against which I had such justified grievance. So we opted for a sombre burial in the Greenhouse, under the shade of the tallest of the mangroves, though in truth it meant a slightly watery grave after all, stuff seeping up through the muck to swallow the foot, bubbles of mud detaching and floating among us during our tiny, foot-size ritual observances. Sledge, having scooped up the dead bees from the doorjamb in the Nursery, embedded these in the gunk to form a ring of bee emissaries, the better to passport the foot into whatever afterlife it deserves. Keldysh recited a poem in Russian, Mstislav made a joke about Gogol, then we sealed up this weird stew with cheesecloth mesh, as we do the rest of the topsoil, to keep it from absconding in the zero-G.

Afterward, back to work or to sulking in our hidey-holes. I'm no longer so much an occasion for renewed bonhomie. My ailment is just another ambient backdrop now, another machine falling apart with no parts to replace the scrapped ones, another grim dispatch from the quadrants of the deadly dull but not yet quite deadly enough condition our condition is in. My cancer is a mood. We all of us up here have our moods.

Now a part of me will never touch Earth again, Chase.

Happy New Year!
Footloose,
J.

March 19th

C.,

Forgive glitchos, I type in the dark. The screen's backlighting's shot, too. One of the leaf-cutter bees is crawling on my face, drinking sweat—hard not to interpret it as a mosquito and swat it away, but they'll sting if incited, and I've had my requisite bee stings for the week already. We've all taken to negotiating this lightless humid labyrinth in bare feet (or, in my case, foot), mostly in un-

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"Black is the new black."

derwear or pajamas—if we had little enough motivation to impress one another with personal grooming before, the last is gone—and when I wedged my foot below Keldysh's console, to write you this letter, I stirred some growth both vine-tangled and mulchy, and up rose the vivid, unmistakable smell of fresh unfiltered apple cider, the kind with a simple label, from Vermont or Connecticut.

It's been a while, Chase, but I won't apologize now for that. I've got more to tell than I'll manage (or Mission Control could ever sanction releasing). Systems began domino-falling, one failure catalyzing another, in mid-February. At some point, Keldysh persuaded us to create a rotation of diagnostic maintenance shutdowns, isolating each in turn: climate, navigation, communications, orbital tracking, plumbing, and so on. Hardly attractive, but no one came up with a credible Plan B. Everything went swimmingly (some words are treacherous—what I'd give for a swim!) until the last time we switched off the central-core light banks, ten days ago now, and they wouldn't come back on. They still haven't. (Picture a Russian flipping a switch repeatedly, frowning in the dark.) We're rationing the backup generator's delegated functions, and the obscenely draining emergency lights don't make the cut, so we're down to what illumination Sledge's biospectrum grow lights can shed, as he places them here and there on his unfathomable schedule, a farmer rotating crops throughout the station. (For more on Sledge's new green-thumb imperatives, stay tuned.) Keldysh warns that this may be our last communications packet; he scheduled us each a one-hour session on the sole functioning keyboard—no luxury of writer's block today! While morale is low, we have a kind of camaraderie at last. I suppose a similar peace may be gained by prisoners sharing death row. This is no time for settling scores. However, I want it on record, right here and now, that I never, ever stole anything from the fridge—anyone else's leftovers or the Captain's birthday cake.

Though black humor is the only functioning humor here, I didn't quite have the nerve to ask if I could take Zamyatin's keyboard hour. I suspect it'll go unused, a symbolic silent communication, an aria of cosmic null-music to foreshadow the chorale the rest of us will soon chime in with. Zamyatin commandeered a landing module and kamikazied himself out of the air lock yesterday. No one was certain what (more) was wrong when Klaxons sounded, but Keldysh inventoried the missing lander, and on doing a head count and finding Z. absent we rushed to the Library's south window, which gives a panorama of Earth through a coy lace veil of mines, a view we usually avoid. Just in time to see him flare and burn; as expected, he'd sparked one of the Chinese mines, making a tiny missing tooth in the dynamite smile that pins us on the far side of home. We cheered wildly. It isn't as though Zamyatin's bid could be whitewashed as anything other than suicide—the modules aren't armored for reëntry, so he'd have been baked Alaska on meeting Earth's atmosphere even if he had negotiated the mine layer. But that would have been a purely symbolic triumph, whereas this we could call taking one for the team.

And then there were five. Our remaining lives are in Sledge's hands. What little remains of them. I suppose our remains will be in his hands, too, in the sense that the whole of Northern Lights is being given over to the gardens, now expanded from the Greenhouse to wherever Sledge can get something green to cling or take root and get busy swapping our exhaled breath for something worth inhaling. So when this last brave stand collapses, and we asphyxiate in one collective heap, there'll be no one left to give us interstellar funerals—instead, we'll rot in the dark mossy grotto we've left behind. At least we no longer fear starvation, as Sledge is always ladling up some fruity or rooty stew—there's plenty of spare biomass to consume. The ironies are rich. Trapped in the infinite cold of space, we bake like Russian mafiosi in a steam room. Technology expelled us from Earth's garden and then, having shot its wad, gardening is left to take over. Similarly, runaway growth is eating me from within, yet Sledge encourages a runaway growth that may prolong my life, allowing me to die longer. The station has a kind of cancer—we smell it in the corridors everywhere, and trip over new growth every time we touch our blind appendages to the walls. As a girl, Chase, I always did get tubers and tumors confused.

Ordinarily, I'm exempted from my turn helping Sledge shift his banks of grow lights from one position to the next, but one day recently I was feeling vital (and bored shitless) enough to give it a go. In zero-G, the task doesn't involve any lifting, obviously, and even a one-footed lady can aid in nudging the fixtures around awkward corners. Sometimes, in all this dark, it's pleasant to cling to those few yellowish lights, too. This day, Sledge confessed to me the basis of his mastery of indoor agriculture: he once single-handedly ran the most fecund and profitable indoor marijuana farm on the whole island of Manhattan. The operation was tucked inside a four-room apartment on the Upper East Side, unsuspected not only by the authorities (kept off the scent by elaborately rerouted utility accounts, the huge electrical bills thrown to other addresses like a ventriloquist's voice into a dummy's body) but even by the closest neighbors, who regarded Sledge as an innocent and forgettable fellow-tenant in the large and anonymous building. Sledge described the operation generously: the rooms teeming to the scrolled plaster ceilings with bud-heavy green stalks, the floor cabled with sprinklers, the walls lined with foil reflectors to maximize the ripening effects of the solar-spectrum lamps, the stereo chattering NPR—talk radio to cover the drone of the daytime light banks, and classical music to give the plants a cultural heritage through the cool damp night. In one large closet, he kept what he called "the mother plant," a grotesquely thickened and practically pulsing rope of marijuana from which he cloned seedlings, a fine-tuned specimen of THC. The result he spliced from her was the highest high-end "one-toke dope," or so he bragged. He'd made himself and several confederates wealthy from the operation before a paranoid inkling triggered a violent two-day fit in which he completely disassembled the farm and eradicated its traces. It was those skills which have turned our once-shiny space station into a steamy green bacteria-funky lung. I suppose I've become Sledge's mother plant now, the improbable thing he keeps alive in an unnatural cramped space.

I don't know why I'm wasting so much of my keyboard time paraphrasing Sledge's tale, except that it was as if I'd visited the place myself. We're prone to transporting visualizations these days, in our darkened station, not to mention vivid olfactory hallucinations like the apple cider presently rising to my nostrils. The Russians talk about their childhoods incessantly, when they talk at all. Mstislav, drifting in the dark like a dreamer in a sensory-deprivation tank, has spontaneously offered several wistful accounts of cutting his bare foot on a sickle while pursuing a goat, and although we've many creatures roaming the station now that the Greenhouse doors have been thrown open, I'm fairly certain there's no goat on our roster. For me, it isn't juvenile pastorale to which I revert, but moments between us, Chase, daydream flashes I prefer not to believe I've cobbled out of wishful thinking and damp air. (Did you know we can't even properly gaze at the stars now? Our breath fogs any window we turn to. We're moisture, Chase, we're returning to dew.) I know I've got a lot of gall questioning your existence when it's my own that's so transparently dubious, or dubiously transparent, or something. But you never write, you never call, ha ha ha. So each time I roam the corridors of the Met in my imaginings, seeking that Chinese garden where our cool thrilling birdlike kisses were exchanged, finding that oasis of stone and fern and skylight, bowing my head to see our twinned reflections in the rippling pool there (and what is it that has stirred the water?—some misdirected wishing-person dropping pennies? The silent putter of filtration?), the museum and the Chinese garden and the mirror of water grow clearer and clearer while you begin to pale, I see only myself and a shimmer beside me, you're nothing now but an urgent elusive talisman, an object glimpsed but unseen, a fish's lure in the deep, a reason to go on living. And I do that, Chase. At someone's command, and I prefer to believe it is yours, my friend, I go on living.

Love,
J. ♦

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Jonathan Lethem reads a James Thurber story.

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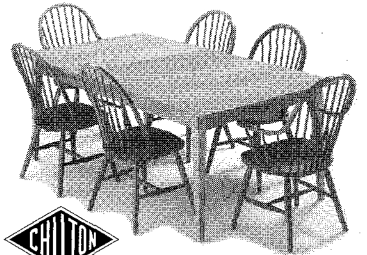

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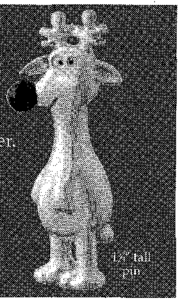

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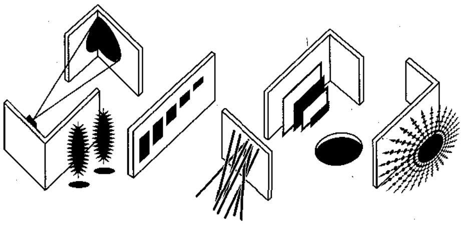


BOOKS

THE CHILD TRAP

The rise of overparenting.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

We've all been there—that is, in the living room of friends who invited us to dinner without mentioning that this would include a full-evening performance by their four-year-old. He sings, he dances, he eats all the hors d'oeuvres. When you try to speak to his parents, he interrupts. Why should they talk to you, about things he's not interested in, when you could all be discussing how his hamster died? His parents seem to agree; they ask him to share his feelings about that event. You yawn. Who cares? Dinner is finally served, and the child is sent off to some unfortunate person in the kitchen. The house shakes with his screams. Dinner over, he returns, his sword point sharpened. His parents again ask him how he feels. It's ten o'clock. Is he tired? No! he says. You, on the other hand, find yourself exhausted, and you make for the door, swearing never to have kids or, if you already did, never to visit your grandchildren. You'll just send checks.

This used to be known as "spoiling." Now it is called "overparenting"—or "helicopter parenting" or "hothouse parenting" or "death-grip parenting." The term has changed because the pattern has changed. It still includes spoiling—no rules, many toys—but two other, complicating factors have been added. One is anxiety. Will the child be permanently affected by the fate of the hamster? Did he touch the corpse, and get a germ? The other new element—at odds, it seems, with such solicitude—is achievement pressure. The heck with the child's feelings. He has a nursery-school interview tomorrow. Will he be accepted? If not, how will he ever get into a good college? Overparenting is the subject of a number of recent books, and they all deplore it in the strongest possible terms.

Most of us have heard of people who pipe Mozart into their child's room. In "A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting" (Broadway; $23.95), Hara Estroff Marano, an editor-at-large at *Psychology Today*, writes that Baby Einstein, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company, will sell you not just a Baby Mozart CD but also a Baby Beethoven. Both are available on DVD as well, with the music supplemented by puppet shows and other imagery. These DVDs, Baby Einstein says, are for the three-months-and-older age group. Since, at three months, babies cannot sit up, parents will have to hold them in front of the monitor, and since these infants have only just learned to focus their eyes, it is hard to know what they will make of the material. (Nothing at all, Susan Linn, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School, told the Chicago *Tribune:* "The baby video industry is a scam.")

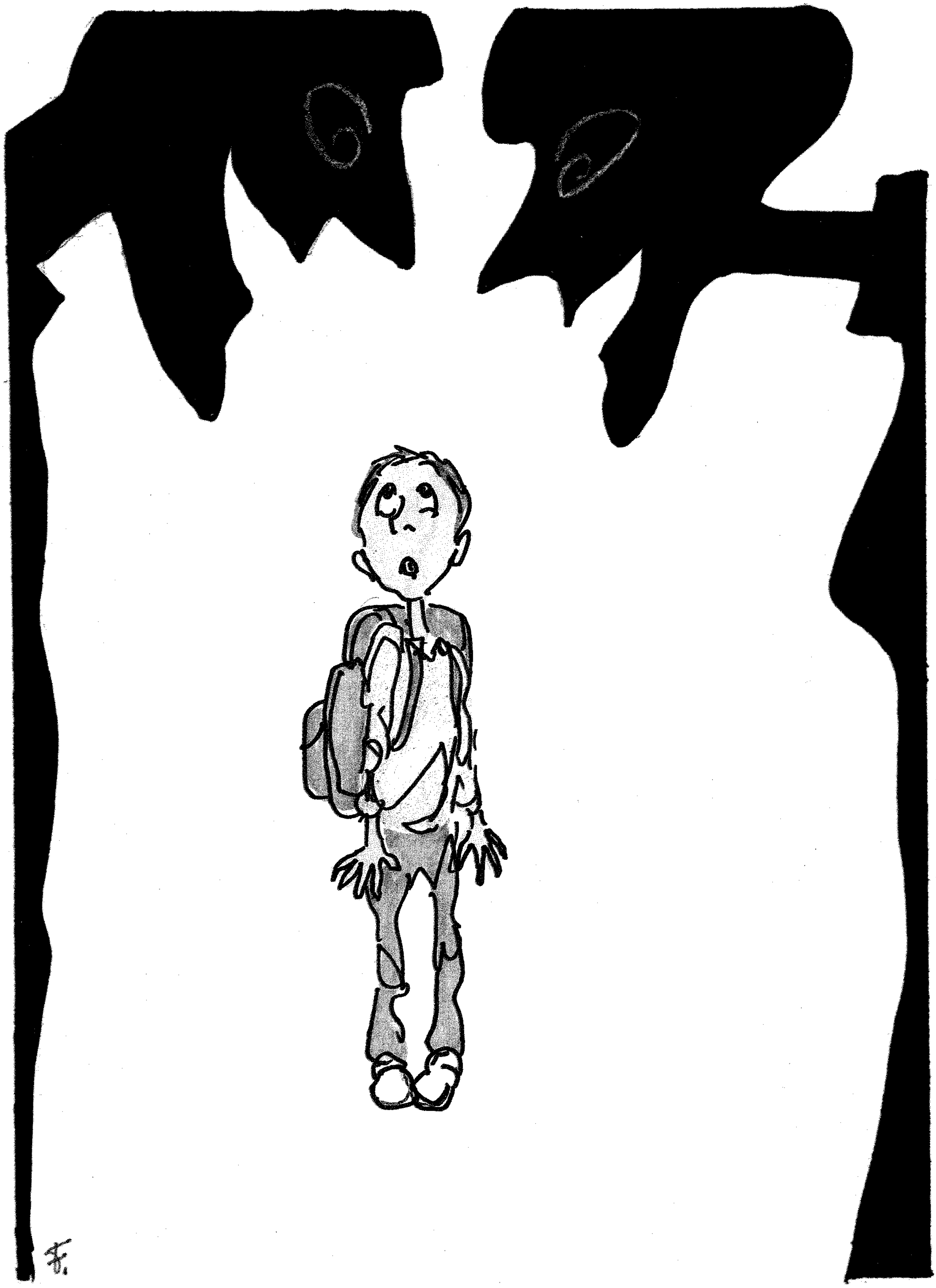
The DVDs are intended to provide you with a head start on the academic-achievement front, but there is also the environmental-hazards problem. Hovering parents, Marano says, see lethal bacilli on every surface. To thwart them in the supermarket, you can buy a Buggy Bagg, a protective pad that you insert into the front of the grocery cart before you put the child in. According to Buggy Bagg's literature, this will guard against "viruses, bacteria, and bodily fluids" left on the cart. In a survey that Marano cites, a third of parents reported that they sent their offspring to school with antibacterial hand gels. Who trusts soap?

Once the child goes to nursery school, the academic pressure begins. Gone are the finger paints. Even preschools, Marano tells us, have replaced playtime with reading- and math-readiness training. As the child progresses, the academic load becomes heavier, and his ability to carry it is now regularly measured by standardized tests, as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Because the test results are rendered in numbers—and can thus be compared with the norm, the ideal, and the neighbor's kid—ambitious parents may, at this point, begin hiring tutors. According to Marano, there is now a four-billion-dollar tutoring industry in the United States, much of it serving elementary-school children. (Some of the coaches sent out by Princeton Review, a leading tutor-provider, charge close to four hundred dollars an hour.) If tutoring doesn't do the trick, enterprising parents can argue with the school that their children, because of special needs, should not be held to a time limit in taking standardized tests. In 2005, according to *Slate*, seven to nine per cent of students in Washington, D.C., were given extra time on their S.A.T.s. Their scores—which were sent out to colleges, with no notice of the dispensation, alongside the scores of students working against the clock—were, on average, well above those of others.

Overparented children typically face not just a heavy academic schedule but also a strenuous program of extracurricular activities—tennis lessons, Mandarin classes, ballet. After-school activities are thought to impress college admissions officers. At the same time, they keep kids off the street. (In the words of one book, "You can't smoke pot or lose your virginity at lacrosse practice.") When summer comes, the child is often sent to a special-skills camp. Extracurricular activities and camps are areas where competition between parents, thought to be a major culprit in this whole business, is likely to surface. How do you explain to the other mother that while her child spent the summer examining mollusks at marine-biology camp, yours was at a regular old camp, stringing beads and eating s'mores?

Finally comes the Last Judgment: col-

ABOVE: PIERRE DI SCIULLO; OPPOSITE: JULES FEIFFER



Overparented children typically face not just a heavy academic schedule but also a strenuous program of extracurricular activities.

lege applications. Admissions officers, it is said, don't know what to make of application forms these days—many of them have so clearly been filled out by someone other than the applicant. If the parents don't feel up to the job, they can turn to IvyWise, a service that, for a fee ranging from three thousand to *forty thousand* dollars, gives students a course in how to get into college. IvyWise's offerings include "Application Boot Camp," on how to complete the forms, and "Essay Writing Workshop," on how to get the application essay into "optimal shape for submission." Careful parents don't have to wait for application time, however. IvyWise will also advise high-school freshmen and sophomores on which courses and extracurricular activities to choose, so that two or three years later, when the application process begins, they won't make the awful discovery that they have been spending their time on classes and clubs that will not please admissions committees.

When the student goes off to college, overparenting need not stop. Many mothers and fathers, or their office assistants, edit their children's term papers by e-mail. They also give them cell phones equipped with G.P.S. monitors, in order to track their movements. In Marano's eyes, the cell phone, by allowing children to consult with their parents over any problem, any decision, any "flicker of experience," has become the foremost technological adjunct of overparenting. Some parents, she adds, are not content with calling. They buy a second home in their child's college town. According to a recent report on this trend in the *Times*, the child may protest, at the start. A student at Colorado College told the *Times* that when she found out that her parents, Maryland residents, were buying a four-bedroom house fifteen minutes from her school, she thought, "Are you kidding me? You're following me across the country?" But then she came to like the arrangement: "I found myself not doing my laundry until my mom was in town." I wonder if it was actually she who did the laundry.

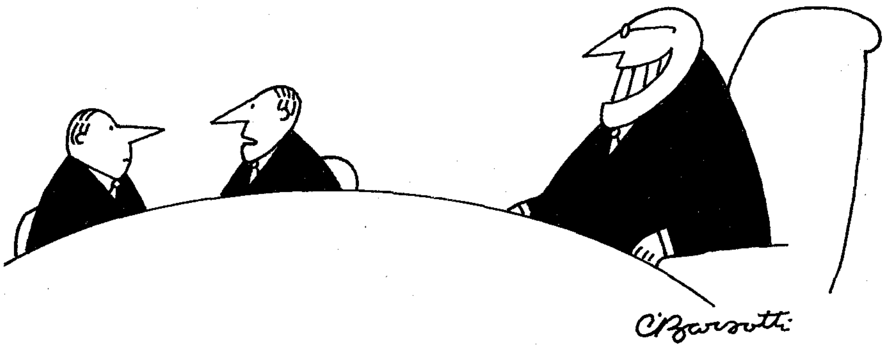
Students provided with such benefits may study harder and, upon graduation, land a fancy job. On the other hand, they may join the ranks of the "boomerang children," who move straight back home. A recent survey found that fifty-five per cent of American men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, and fourteen per cent between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, live with their parents. Among the reasons cited are the high cost of housing, heavy competition for good jobs, and the burden of repaying college loans, but another factor may be sheer habit, even desire. Marano and others believe that, while hovering parents say that their goal is to launch the child into the world successfully, the truth lies deeper, in some dark dependency, some transfer of the parent's identity to the child.

One cause of the overparenting trend, Marano says, is the working mother. That seems paradoxical: if Mother is at the office, how can she hover over the child? Well, she can hover at night and on weekends. The rest of the time, she can hire someone else to do it—and secretly install a "nanny cam" (one model is disguised as a smoke detector), to make sure it's being done right. Marano believes, however, that the risk of overparenting is greater for a woman who quits her job in favor of full-time mothering while her children are young. Such a woman faces a huge loss of income—one source says a million dollars, on average, over the course of her career. It is no surprise that she might want child-rearing to be a project worthy of that sacrifice.

Another cause—and Marano stresses it over all others—is insecurity bred of the global economy. When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, in 1957—the first unmanned spacecraft, ever, and not ours—American school curricula shifted dramatically toward math and the hard sciences. "How are we ever going to beat the Russians?" people asked. Likewise, Marano says, the overparenting phenomenon got going in the seventies, in response to "stagflation" and the oil crisis, and has been nourished, ever since, by the rise of the global economy. No Child Left Behind: that sounds like the expression of a democratic wish. More likely, it was the product of an economic wish—that America not be left behind by India and China.

A third development that pushed people into overparenting, Marano and others believe, is the "brain plasticity" research published in the nineteen-nineties. This research said that, while the infant brain is, in part, the product of genes, that endowment is just the clay; after birth, it is "sculpted" by the child's experience, the amount of stimulation he receives, above all in the first three years of life. That finding prompted many programs aimed at stimulating babies whose mothers, for whatever reason (often poverty), seemed likely to neglect them. Social workers drove off to homes deemed at risk, to play with the new baby. But upper-middle-class parents—and marketers interested in them—also read about the brain-plasticity findings, and figured that, if some stimulation is good, more is better. (Hence Baby Einstein.) Later research has provided no support for this. The conclusion, in general, is that the average baby's environment provides all the stimuli he or she needs.

Marano thinks that the infant-stimulation craze was a scandal. She accepts the idea of brain plasticity, but she believes that the sculpting goes on for many years past infancy and that its primary arena should be *self*-stimulation, as the child ventures out into the world. While Mother was driving the kid nuts with the eight-hundredth iteration of "This Little Piggy," she should have been letting him play on his own. Marano assembles her own arsenal of neurological research, guaranteed to scare the pants off any hovering parent. As children explore their environment by themselves—making decisions, taking chances, coping with any attendant anxiety or frustration—their neurological



"Now that we've spoken truth to power, let's get the hell out of here."

equipment becomes increasingly sophisticated, Marano says. "Dendrites sprout. Synapses form." If, on the other hand, children are protected from such trial-and-error learning, their nervous systems "literally shrink."

Such atrophy, Marano claims, may be undetectable in the early years, when overattentive parents are doing for the child what he should be doing on his own, but once he goes off to college the damage becomes obvious. Marano sees an epidemic of psychological breakdown on college campuses: "The middle of the night may find a SWAT team of counselors calming down a dorm wing after having crisis-managed an acute manic episode or yet another incident of self-mutilation." Overparented students who avoid or survive college meltdowns are still impaired, Marano argues. Having been taught that the world is full of dangers, they are risk-averse and pessimistic. ("It may be that robbing children of a positive sense of the future is the worst form of violence that parents can do to them," she writes.) Schooled in obedience to authority, they will be poor custodians of democracy. Finally—and, again, she stresses this—their robotic behavior will threaten "American leadership in the global marketplace." That was the factor that frightened parents into hovering. And by their hovering they prevented their children from developing the very traits—courage, nimbleness, outside-the-box thinking—that are required by the new economic order.

Marano gets a vote of agreement from "Under Pressure: The New Movement Inspiring Us to Slow Down, Trust Our Instincts, and Enjoy Our Kids" (Harper One; $24.95), by Carl Honoré, a partisan of the so-called "slow movement," which is aimed at persuading us all to abandon the fast track. Honoré is not from the United States—he was brought up in Canada and lives in London—and he therefore looks beyond his own national boundaries. You might have thought that the United States, with its susceptibility to child-rearing fads, would be worse off than other countries in the matter of overparenting. Not so, Honoré says. Look at East Asia, where tutoring and testing constitute a sort of religion. In international comparisons, he says, East Asian youngsters "score near the top in math and science, yet rank near the bottom for enjoyment of those subjects." And where the joy of learning has vanished, Honoré argues, so have its ethics. He feels that test-driven schooling has contributed to what is apparently a recent surge in cheating, so much easier, now, with the Internet: "Nearly three-quarters of Canadian undergraduates recently admitted to serious acts of cheating on written work while in high school. . . . In 2007, officials revealed that five per cent of applicants to Oxford and Cambridge had embellished their application forms with material taken off the Web. Explaining why they wanted to study chemistry, two hundred and thirty-four applicants cited word for word the same example, 'burning a hole in my pajamas at age eight,' as a formative experience."

As for children's safety, Honoré makes what will no doubt be the controversial recommendation that we stop fretting about it. He quotes Samuel Butler on the subject: "Young people have a marvelous faculty of either dying or adapting themselves to circumstances." Allergy rates in children are rising throughout the industrialized world. Honoré blames this on oversanitized environments: "Just look at what happened in Germany. Before unification, allergy rates were much higher in the western part, even though the Communist-run eastern half had much worse pollution and more children living on farms. After the countries reunited, East Germany was cleaned up and urbanized—and allergy rates soared."

Finally, Honoré takes on domestic psychology, in particular the "self-esteem movement" born of the nineteen-seventies. To him, as to other writers on overparenting, this is a matter of disgust. "Every doodle ends up on the fridge door," he says. According to the research he's read, such ego-pumping confers no benefit. A review of thousands of studies found that high self-esteem in children did not boost grades or career prospects, or even resistance to adult alcoholism. If I am not mistaken, however, there is something about the self-esteem movement that strikes Honoré at a level deeper than the question of our children's competence. Marano, as the title of her book tells us, is worried that we are producing a nation of wimps, people who won't "make it." Honoré is worried that the Stepford children produced by overparenting *will* make it, and turn the world into a rude, heartless, boring place.

He's not the only one. Sooner or later, all critics of overparenting get to the problem of morals—the sheer selfishness of these parents and of the children they produce. Even the pragmatic Marano makes this point. Why, she asks, aren't parents "manning the barricades," demanding benefits for all children? Why do they care only about their own? And doesn't it bother them that the extra help they can buy for their children—the college-admissions courses, the tutoring—is tilting the playing field? Hovering, as most of these books acknowledge, is largely the preserve of upper-middle-class parents, and these people want their children to prosper as they did, fairness be damned. The socioeconomics get special attention from Madeline Levine, whose 2006 book "The Price of Privilege" is now in paperback (Harper; $13.95). Levine is a clinical psychologist, specializing in the treatment of adolescents, in California's Marin County. In other words, she spends her days ministering to rich children, many with ambitious parents looming over them. She seems inured to the girls' tales of giving blow jobs behind the gym, but she describes with real dismay her patients' lack of any "conscience, generosity."

The focus of Gary Cross's "Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity" (Columbia; $29.50) is specifically the current generation of young men, compared with those of the post-Second World War period (Cross's father's generation) and those of the sixties (his own generation). According to Cross's statistics, this new breed takes much longer to get jobs, marry, and have children—that is, to grow up, by his definition. Instead, these boy-men, as he calls them, hang out with their friends and play video games. They don't even have girlfriends anymore, Cross says. They're content with "hookups," casual arrangements. A professor of history at Penn State, Cross has done a lot of research. He seems to have watched every episode of "Father Knows Best" and "Seinfeld." His conclusion, that the fathers of yesteryear *did* know best, or better—that the patriarchy wasn't so bad, after all—is disappointing, but it should be said that what he admires in the old-time dads is not so much that they knew how to wield power as that they looked out for someone besides themselves, an interest not popular with the boy-man crowd.

These books' concern with altruism probably stems, in part, from "positive psychology," a new movement that stresses fulfillment and affiliation as primary measures of mental health. But, like positive psychology, the moral emphasis is clearly related to the values of the sixties and the early seventies, the world that we left behind in the buckle-down eighties. The writers are shocked by the materialism of the new generation. (You should hear Honoré on the subject of today's high-end birthday parties.) They also note with alarm the rising indifference to any species of idealism. Levine describes a 1998 study at U.C.L.A.:

> When asked about reasons for going to college during the 1960s and early seventies, most students placed the highest value on "becoming an educated person" or "developing a philosophy of life." A minority deemed "making a lot of money" as the main reason to attend college. Beginning in the 1990s, a majority of students say that "making a lot of money" has become the most important reason to go to college, outranking both the reasons above, as well as "becoming an authority in my field," or "helping others in difficulty."

In view of these writers' reversion to the values of the sixties, they are strangely reluctant to cite the thinkers of that period. You could read most of these books without finding out that there was a progressive-school movement in the fifties and sixties, or that R. D. Laing ever talked about "inauthenticity," or Abraham Maslow about higher-order needs.

On the other hand, some writers do address the sixties—and give it poor marks. "My generation's obsession with youth," Cross writes, "stands out in the history of human vanity." He thinks that today's layabout young men are the inheritors. Another book that indicts the sixties, though from a different perspective, is "Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority" (2003), by Richard Arum, a professor of sociology and education at New York University. It was in the sixties, Arum tells us, that the students'-rights movement began, as an effort to protect minority children from unfair treatment. The resulting lawsuits won the right of due process for all children threatened with expulsion or, in some cases, merely suspension. And this, Arum says, resulted in a new, worse kind of unfair treatment for minority students. The due-process requirement intimidated teachers, discouraging them from imposing discipline. The students ran wild. Furthermore, school administrators became sitting ducks for aggressive parents seeking preferential treatment for their children. In one of Arum's sources, a teacher is quoted as saying, with regard to discipline, "It all depends on who you grab. Grab the dumb ones—they don't know what the hell to do. Don't grab a lawyer's kid." Of course, the ones who don't know what to do—or whose parents don't—are the poorer children.

Arum's conclusions are the product of long research. Other writings on the connection between the sixties and current child-rearing practices sound more like the product of fogyism. A good example is an article, "The Kindergarchy," that the conservative commentator Joseph Epstein recently contributed to *The Weekly Standard*. "My mother never read to me, and my father took me to no ballgames," Epstein writes. They took no photographs, avowed no love, of him. This, he says, was the general approach to child-rearing in the nineteen-forties and fifties, when he grew up, and children benefitted: they developed into regular people, "going about the world's business." As for the steamy devotion shown by later generations of parents, what it has produced are snotty little brats filled with "anger at such abstract enemies as The System," and intellectual lightweights, certain (because their parents told them so) that their every thought is of great consequence. Epstein says that, when he was teaching, he was often tempted to write on his students' papers: "D-. Too much love in the home." As his essay suggests, critics of overparenting have political concerns as well as moral ones. The politics go both ways, however. The conservatives are afraid that we're turning our children into pampered ninnies (that is, Democrats); the liberals that we're producing selfish, authoritarian robots (Republicans).

The literature on overparenting raises a number of sticky questions. For example, is it really wrong for us to push our children to excel in areas where they are talented? Honoré relates how his seven-year-old son's art teacher told him that the child was a truly gifted artist. So the next morning Honoré suggested to the boy that he take an art class after school, and got the following response: "I don't want to go to class and have a teacher tell me what to do—I just want to draw. . . . Why do grown-ups have to take over everything?" Honoré backed off, ashamed of what he now judged to be his opportunism. If the fathers of Mozart and the Williams sisters had done the same thing, the history of human achievement would have been different.

Another discomforting matter in these books is the role of feminism in today's child-rearing follies. According to Gary Cross, one reason that young men are refusing to grow up is that the women's movement has eliminated the rewards for doing so. In return for putting on a suit every morning and going to work, men used to be the boss both in the office and at home. No more. So why grow up? Cross acknowledges that patriarchy and slackerhood are not the only available choices. As he notes, some people are saying that our society, by discarding sexism, can produce a new kind of man, one who is "nurturing and emotionally expressive," and who "abandons his old patriarchal privileges and embraces equality in private and public roles." Cross is not looking forward to such a development, however: "How many men (or women) can distinguish this approach from the stereotypical wimp?" I can, but there are other matters to consider as well—for example, Marano's claim that if a woman, before having children, holds a high-powered job, this may predispose her to overparenting whether or not she quits the job to stay home with the kids. I'm sure Marano doesn't believe that women who plan to have a family should not be given responsible jobs—I'm not so sure about Cross—but, if what she says is true, this raises the old problem that, if you improve some element in a system, another element may break down in response. Adjust the carburetor, and the transmission goes out of whack.

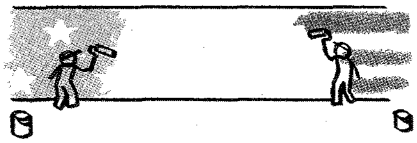
A final question that one has to ask is whether the overparenting trend is truly the emergency that these authors say it is. In the manner of popular books on psychology, the commentators tend to forget that they are talking, for the most part, about a minority. (Recent surveys have found that today's teen-agers are volunteering for community service at a rate unequalled since the nineteen-forties.) And the writing is very pushy. Marano's book is endlessly repetitive; you could read every third paragraph and not miss anything. Also, what about the sensationalism? Are there really SWAT teams of therapists descending on college dorms in the middle of the night? Honoré, too, beats us over the head. In almost every chapter, he (1) isolates the baleful trend—standardized tests, overcoached sports, and the like; (2) reports that some brave folk are now bucking the tide; (3) visits a site of their revisionist activity—the experimental school, the back-yard ballgame; and (4) reports on how the children thrive under the new regime. In one progressive school that he inspects, "the mood is pure sunshine." The students stampede to class; they tell Honoré how much they love homework. Never, in any of these wholesome environments, is any child starting a fight or picking his nose.

To get some perspective, look at "Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood" (2004), by Steven Mintz, a professor of history at Columbia. Mintz's story begins with the beginning of the United States, and therefore he describes children with troubles greater than overparenting: boys dispatched to coal mines, and girls to textile mills, at age nine or ten. As for the current outbreak of worry over the young, Mintz reminds us that America has seen such panics before—for example, in the nineteen-fifties, with the outcry over hot rods, teen sex, and rock and roll. The fifties even had its own campaign against overparenting, or overmothering—Momism, as it was called. This was thought to turn boys into homosexuals. For the past three decades, Mintz writes, discussions of child-rearing in the United States have been dominated by a "discourse of crisis," and yet America's youth are now, on average, "bigger, richer, better educated, and healthier than at any other time in history." There have been some losses. Middle-class white boys from the suburbs have fallen behind their predecessors, but middle-class girls and minority children are far better off. Mintz thinks that we worry too much, or about the wrong things. Despite general prosperity—at least until recently—the percentage of poor children in America is greater today than it was thirty years ago. One in six children lives below the poverty line. If you want an emergency, Mintz says, there's one. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

2666, *by Roberto Bolaño, translated from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30).* More vast and more lurid than his previous novels that have been translated into English, "2666" is not Roberto Bolaño's masterpiece but almost a compendium, in individual scenes, of the qualities that made him a great writer. His themes are violence, dislocation, and the sexiness of literature, and here these strands are recombined endlessly, in Europe, Detroit, and Mexico, through multiple narrators and prose styles. The action converges on the Sonoran desert, where Bolaño anatomizes, in brutal and eerie detail, the true-life murders of hundreds of women, most of which remain unsolved. By the end, after close to nine hundred pages, the reader will be impressed by the range and power on display but might wish that the novel cohered, rather than merely concluding.

The Northern Clemency, *by Philip Hensher (Knopf; $26.95).* The English middle class is scrutinized in this sprawling account of two families on an affluent Sheffield housing estate. The Sellerses, carried north by a job transfer with "the Electricity," arrive on Rayfield Avenue in 1974, just as Katherine Glover is stamping to death her youngest child's illicit pet snake in front of the house opposite. Despite this traumatic beginning, the Sellerses and the Glovers gradually develop the ties of proximity—teen-agers becoming friends, younger children caught up in playground games, wives sharing confidences and glasses of wine. Hensher's attention is on the foreground, revealing ordinary life through impressive, often funny set pieces and assiduously observed dramatic episodes, which almost compensate for the lack of an organized plot. The transformative events of the Thatcher years (notably, the local coal miners' strike of 1984) unfold in the distance; "clothy" vol-au-vents are as indicative as miners' wives collecting donations of tinned food.



Remix, *by Lawrence Lessig (Penguin; $25.95).* As Lessig, a law professor at Stanford, sees it, if intellectual-property law is left as it is an entire generation will be criminalized. He argues that the ways in which young people break copyright laws help them to become the sort of people we want them to be—creative and collaborative. Kids today are simply not going to give up downloading music and using copyrighted material in YouTube videos: they belong to a culture for which "remix" is "the essential art." Lessig's proposals for revising copyright are compelling, because they rethink intellectual-property rights without abandoning them. He argues that hybrids that combine the "commercial and sharing" economies can create value for both sides (as Harry Potter fan sites and Lostpedia have done); indeed, one problem is media companies' appropriating the work of fans without returning the favor. "When both benefit," Lessig writes, "how do we say who is riding for free?"

The City's End, *by Max Page (Yale; $37.50).* This richly detailed book celebrates the enduring cultural significance of New York with an account of our unending desire to envision its demise. Since the nineteenth century, when the city established itself as a symbol not only of power and wealth but of racial diversity and class stratification, New York—beset by immigrants, crime, and crises real and imagined—has been the locus of America's apocalyptic anxieties. Page, a professor of architecture and history, charts the evolution of popular fears in films, drawings, literature, video games, and amusement-park rides. His argument that "each era has found it useful to destroy New York in its own particular way" draws on theorists like Spengler and Sontag, but they are less illuminating than the gleeful illustrations, which attest to the notion that "no place looks better destroyed than New York."

THE THEATRE

KISS AND TELL

Botched love in Kevin Elyot and John Patrick Shanley.

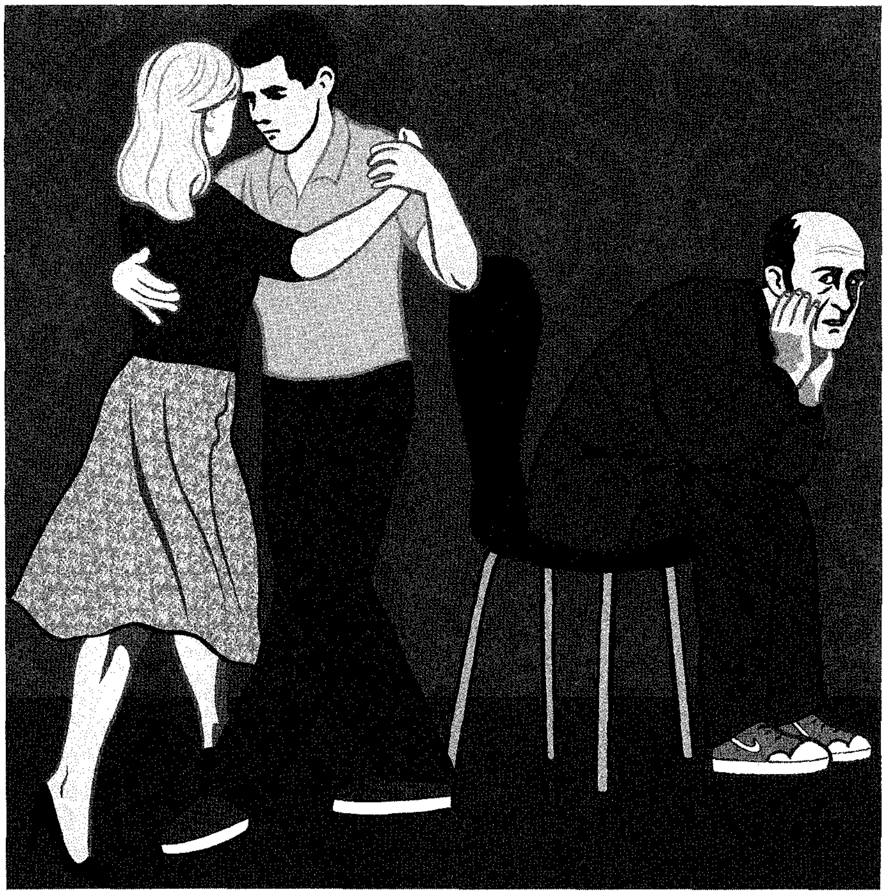
BY JOHN LAHR

To the list of playwrights whose gravestones should read "Finally, a Plot" let us add the name of Britain's Kevin Elyot. Elyot's 2001 play "Mouth to Mouth" (directed by Mark Brokaw, at the Acorn) is a Proustian exercise in guilt recollected in tranquillity. The play begins and ends in a South London home, where two old friends sit at a kitchen table. Frank (David Cale), a blocked gay playwright with AIDS, is jabbering about hospitals, drugs, and doctors; Laura (Lisa Emery), a silent, attractive middle-aged woman, stares out the window at the garden, wearing sunglasses and chain-smoking with a tremor in her hand. From this minimal and mysterious opening, full of palaver and portentousness, the play unfolds backward, in a series of strategic anecdotal scenes that tell a tale of lust, betrayal, and loss.

The tantalizing slickness of the play's construction is matched by a terse, elliptical narrative style. But what passes for a show of elegant control—"beautifully modulated" is how such thin works are usually praised—is actually a sort of authorial fudging. Tone and tact substitute for depth. Instead of letting his characters find their meaning, Elyot imposes it on them. The structure insures that the audience is never ahead of the characters, though Elyot always is. Underdeveloped and overburdened, Frank and Lisa stagger through the evening, lumbered with intellectual and emotional baggage that they are unequipped to carry. As a result, "Mouth to Mouth" feels arch and stillborn; the author doesn't surprise himself or us. The play's title invokes the kiss of life, which Frank supposedly gave to Laura's drowning fifteen-year-old son—a kiss that, it turns out, included a tongue down his throat. Elyot's storytelling is a similar act of artificial respiration, barely reviving his foundering characters, who gasp for the oxygen of a fictive imagination.

At the center of this tale of woe is Laura's buff son, Phillip (the excellent Christopher Abbott). He is the apple of his mother's eye and, we learn, of Frank's hungry heart. Wearing only his pajama bottoms, he straggles into the middle of a fraught cocktail party, at which Laura's buttoned-down dentist husband, Dennis (Richard Topol), is entertaining his brother Roger (Darren Goldstein), a boorish wine seller, and his dim wife, Cornelia (Elizabeth Jasicki)—Corny, both by nickname and by nature. Just back from a trip to Spain with school friends, Phillip stands before us like a Calvin Klein underwear ad: bare-chested, dishevelled, his bedroom eyes full of sleep and pliant sweetness. In the flirtation between mother and son—"You horror! I bet you didn't think of me once," Laura says—there is an unmistakable whiff of the Oedipal. Later, when Phillip's holiday snapshots reveal a tattoo on his inner thigh—the name of a girl he met in Spain—Laura is scandalized. Phillip stomps out. "It's just so hard, letting go," she tells Frank later, calming down. "And the awful thing is this is just the beginning." At this point, unsummoned and unexplained, Phillip returns with a CD in hand: to placate his mom, he tangos with her, like you do.

Of the many betrayals in this daisy chain of disillusion, the only one dramatized onstage is Frank's betrayal of his friendship with Laura. The well-acted moment is shocking. Finding himself briefly alone with Phillip, Frank throws himself at the boy, like a grizzly gobbling a salmon. When the embrace is over, Frank is all plaintive desire and Phillip all cool disdain. "You shouldn't have done that," Phillip says. "You'd be dead if it weren't for me," Frank says, pleading his case. "I bloody



Emery, Abbott, and Cale dance a pas de trois in "Mouth to Mouth."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

wouldn't," Phillip replies. If the moment reveals Phillip as an amoral cool cookie—"He's going to break a few hearts. . . . The little devil," Laura says to Frank later, unaware that his is already broken—it also shows the humiliating nature of Frank's love. He begs to see Phillip's tattoo; when Phillip rebuffs him, Frank says, "I'm not well, for fuck's sake. . . . I have to make the most of everything. You do understand that, don't you, Phillip?" Phillip drops his trousers, and Frank drops to his knees. He touches the tattoo, then nuzzles the boy's crotch.

The debasing image haunts the play, and Frank. The finale brings us back to the beginning, a year after the sexual encounter. Phillip is dead—another murky offstage incident—and Laura is a broken woman, who stutters when she speaks. At the climactic moment, as if a poltergeist were commenting on the action, an entire kitchen drawer tips over, sending cutlery clattering to the floor and the characters, according to the stage directions, "out of their skin." What is intended as a kind of ironic coup de théâtre plays as a piece of unearned symbolic claptrap. Frank struggles to tell Laura the truth about himself and her son. "I wanted to tell you," he begins, taking a beat to kiss her, "that you're the best friend I've had." The lie sustains them; his confession will come later, in the play that his guilt inspires him to write—the play, I guess, that we're watching—which turns out to be a lie of an altogether different kind.

On the subject of inadequacy, spare a thought, please, for the fine-voiced, hardworking cast of John Patrick Shanley's musical "Romantic Poetry" (directed by Shanley, who also wrote the book and lyrics, at the Manhattan Theatre Club), who are forced onstage without plot, personas, or point. It's a reckless, flabbergasting spectacle, like watching soldiers go into battle with popguns. Shanley, who has never before written a musical, comes to the task armored with a Pulitzer Prize for "Doubt" and an Academy Award for "Moonstruck." Here, in a show that might be subtitled "The Blowhard's Holiday," he is undone by his own vainglory.

"Romantic Poetry" is an abstraction looking for a situation. Shanley writes in praise of the fire of life, the open heart, the big risk, the search for some higher sense of self, beyond comfort and cash. Who could argue with that? Unfortunately, the musical stage is a playground, not a pulpit; Shanley can't hang his essay on any plausible characters or predicaments. For the audience, there is no one to care for and nothing to believe in; there is only the sound of Shanley's self-congratulatory voice. When the actors sing the word "poetry" in unison, they tease it by rising up on the ball of one foot; similarly, Shanley makes himself tall by walking on tiptoe. Every word, every rhyme, every theatrical conceit seems to delight him: the show is positively agog at its own cleverness. Watch him name-drop: "Did I hear you, dear / Did you say Woodmere?" Listen to him rhyme "tune" with "catastrophic moon" and "Venus" with "penis." Hear him slip literary allusions into a romantic conceit:

I am a sailor
You are the sail
I am the Pequod
You are the whale

Henry Krieger, who wrote the music for "Dreamgirls," provides some genial melodies to back up Shanley's folly. The best of the bunch is "Going Through the Motions," a droll comedy number given a charming rendition by Mark Linn-Baker and Jeb Brown. The hokum is played by a quartet and a piano, placed on either side of an angled ramp that swoops down to David Korins's handsome sky-blue floor—a sure sign that the characters aren't going anywhere and nothing much is going to happen. But the evening is not without its moment of prophecy. As one song observes:

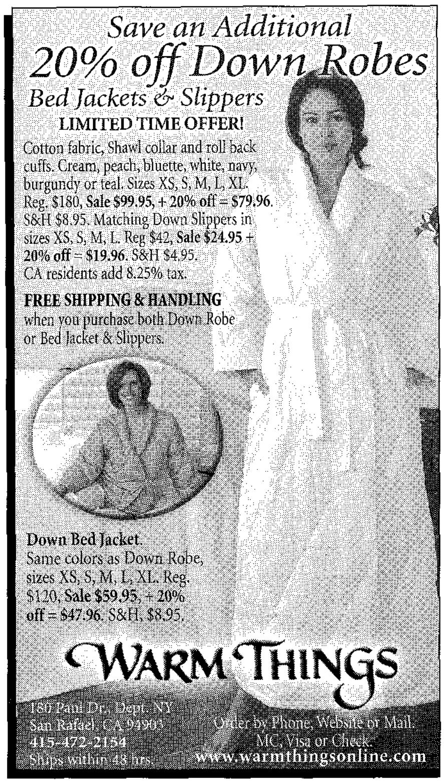
O, where is the god of joy, my friend?
He died and his last word was Oy, my
    friend

I'll drink to that. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

From the Washington Post.

"If one or another section of it [the blueprint] begins to get traction, then we can gear something up rapidly," Fine added. "Everybody's touching base, putting their ducks in a row, so if we have to flip the switch, we can do it fast."



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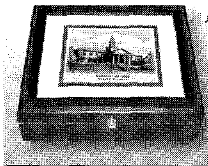

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DANCING

TUDOR REIGN

A.B.T. celebrates a centennial.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

American Ballet Theatre spent its two-week fall season at City Center celebrating the centenary of the Anglo-American choreographer Antony Tudor. Tudor was part of the extraordinary convocation of dancemakers—Martha Graham, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham—who worked in New York around the middle of the last century, but his reputation has always been smaller than the others'. In part, it's because his output was meagre. Though he lived to be seventy-eight, most of his major ballets, and all his finest ones (to my knowledge), were made by the time he was thirty-four. Tudor was a prickly, sarcastic man—a perfectionist who tormented his dancers and himself. In consequence, he worked very slowly. To accommodate his difficulties, he should have had a company of his own, but, precisely because of his personality, he could not run an organization. Eventually, he threw away his belongings and moved into New York's First Zen Institute, a Buddhist community on the East Side. He went on teaching. (He spent twenty years on the faculty of the Juilliard School, and was probably its most influential dance teacher ever.) He created lovely chamber ballets for his students and some larger pieces for European companies, but his great period was over.

In a way, Tudor was left behind by history. In the nineteen-fifties, American dance went abstract, and abstraction was not his métier—he specialized in "psychological" story ballets. But many first-rate artists dry up after a decade or two. When, in his later years, an acquaintance ran into him on the street and asked when she could expect to see something new by him, he answered that, in order to make a ballet, "I have to have something to say, and for years I haven't had anything to say."

Tudor, a butcher's son, grew up in London's East End and, after leaving school, took a job in the Smithfield meat market (the same place where his father worked), eventually rising to the position of junior clerk. Since childhood, however, he had loved the theatre. After hours, he did some acting with amateur troupes, and, at the age of twenty, he decided that he might refine his way of moving onstage if he took ballet lessons. Luckily, the teacher he ended up with was Marie Rambert, a Ballets Russes veteran who at that time was London's foremost nurturer of choreographic talent. Soon, he forgot about acting; he wanted to make ballets. In 1936, he created "Jardin aux Lilas," or "Lilac Garden," which shows us a garden party at which Caroline, the heroine, is celebrating her engagement to a man she doesn't love. Between collecting their friends' congratulations, the two of them are visited, surreptitiously, among the lilac bushes, by their former lovers: in her case, an innocent cadet, offering tears and flowers; in his, a large, glamorous woman who hurls herself at him, wanting to know why he has left her. This piece, with its careful titration of expressive gesture and, above all, its absorption of such gesture into classical dance—which thus operates as both release and confinement of emotion—is the most piercing psychological ballet ever made. Tudor produced it when he was twenty-seven. "Jardin" was part of A.B.T.'s centennial program, and though people who saw it in the old days say that today's dancers are too shallow—too concerned with technique as opposed to drama—to do it right, I wasn't around when it was supposedly done right, and I think A.B.T.'s dancers perform it beautifully. The night I saw it this season, Julie Kent (Caroline) and Cory Stearns (her lover) tore your heart out and threw it on the floor.

"Jardin aux Lilas" won Tudor some fame in London, but most of his achievements there were overshadowed by those of his great contemporary Frederick Ashton. And so, in 1939, when a fledgling New York organization called Ballet Theatre—now called American Ballet Theatre—invited Tudor to come and stage some ballets, he moved to the United States. (He never forgot, though, that he was asked only after Ashton declined.) At A.B.T., he plunged deeper into psychology, now of the Freudian, libido-and-aggression variety. "Undertow" (1945), his most colorful excursion into that territory—it has a gang rape and a sex murder—is rarely shown today, but A.B.T. still performs "Pillar of Fire," which was made three years earlier and deals with the same sort of material. In it, we see a sensitive young woman, Hagar, who has a problem about sex. She wants it, but she fears it. In a culminating scene, she goes off—into a whorehouse!—with an oily, sinister man who takes her virginity. Then, after much grief, she forges a connection with a nice man, who forgives her lapse, and the two go off sombrely together. "Pillar" was a huge hit, and it established its star, Nora Kaye, as the leading dramatic ballerina of her generation. Once again, the old-timers say that the new-timers can't do it right, and here they may be correct. However lurid the subject matter, Tudor wanted it rendered subtly. While Hagar, to express her torment, has to take stabbing poses on point and make big, crotchy leaps into her seducer's arms, these violent actions are supposed to emerge from ballet, not depart from it. But Gillian Murphy, A.B.T.'s leading Hagar, does seem to leave ballet behind at such moments. You can almost see her thinking, Oh, now I have to do that weird, hard step. Phew! Now I did it. So you get dance, then psychodrama, then dance, and so on. This is not necessarily Murphy's fault. In the forties, Freud was considered an oracle. He isn't today, and if Murphy has to struggle to put across this story about how dirty sex is she can hardly be blamed.

The season included one novelty. In 1943, Tudor made a "Romeo and Juliet" ballet, a curious one, very short (forty-five minutes), and not to the now famous Prokofiev score—which was unknown in the West at that time—but to an arrangement of compositions by Frederick Delius. The ballet was eventually dropped. Its gorgeous neo-Romantic set, by Eugene Berman, was apparently too difficult to take on tour. In 1971, "Romeo" was revived; then it was shelved again. Some of today's dance critics saw it, and they offer mixed reports, but the description given by Judith Chazin-Bennahum, in her 1994 book "The Ballets of Antony Tudor," makes you think that you'll die if you can't see it. Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is probably the prime progenitor of that species of romantic realism—high-flying passion, death-dealing violence—which is so beloved of contemporary balletgoers. One might guess that Tudor, too, would have taken an interest in the play's cornucopia of sex and violence—"Romeo" was made just a year after "Pillar"—but here his subtlety won out. The ballet is all restraint. In the market square, where Mercutio and Tybalt are killed, there are no swords. In the balcony scene, the lovers don't touch. Their encounter, Chazin-Bennahum says, "forms a central static panel in a garden alive with life, swarming with the figures of Capulets and Montagues bearing torches and the young girls of Verona stealing through the arbors," on their way to their own trysts. The lovers are absorbed not just into their society; throughout the ballet, two maids sit at the back of the stage, opening curtains to introduce each scene, and thus telling us that this sad story is theatre, art—eternity—and cannot be otherwise. Chazin-Bennahum writes, "There is hardly a moment when we are allowed to think that . . . happiness is part of Nature's plan."

For the centennial, A.B.T. revived one scene from "Romeo," the "farewell" duet that follows the lovers' wedding night, and it matched Chazin-Bennahum's description. For much of the time, Romeo lies on the bed. The scene belongs to Juliet, who shows us a sequence of exquisite, angular postures that seem to derive not so much from ballet as from early Renaissance painting—the bent neck, the squared legs that Giotto's and Botticelli's saints showed as they received the news of God's plan for them. Eventually, Romeo rises from the bed and dances with Juliet, but soon he picks up his jacket and leaves, without looking back. Both lovers seem to know the ending already.

A.B.T. gave us two different Juliets. Gillian Murphy, as in "Pillar," went from pose to pose, but, oh, what poses, on that perfect ballet instrument that is her body. Xiomara Reyes, a lesser dancer, actually did better, suppressing her accustomed perkiness in deference to the tragedy and, by that effort, achieving a real pathos. But forget casting. One's first thought on looking at this duet is: Why can't A.B.T. revive the whole ballet? When I put that question to Kevin McKenzie, the company's artistic director, he answered that he would love to. Not long after he took over the company, in 1992, he said, he hired someone to research the possibility of remounting the ballet. The report he got was that, while most of the choreography was recoverable (there is a lot of early film, and also notation, of the ballet), the cost of re-creating Berman's opulent sets and costumes would be prohibitive—well over two million dollars today.

Gillian Murphy rehearsing Antony Tudor's "Pillar of Fire."

GUS POWELL

Another impediment, presumably, is that in the nineteen-eighties A.B.T. acquired a second "Romeo and Juliet," Kenneth MacMillan's 1965 version, which, as an archetypal flinger-and-flayer, is an audience favorite. Why, when the company has this popular "Romeo," should it revive Tudor's brooding, experimental version at huge expense? Well, Tudor's is probably more interesting. But, beyond that, think what an education it would be to see these two works side by side. It would be a lesson in the range, the flexibility, of ballet, which is so often seen as a rigid art. It would also be an act of justice to Tudor, and not just because so few of his ballets survive. Many of Tudor's admirers, annoyed by the neglect of his work, defend him on the ground that he was *human*, that he dealt in emotion, in raw truth, not like that facile, twiddly Ashton or that cold fish Balanchine. Such arguments are essentially philistine; they sound like the pronouncements of Soviet critics, defending true hearts as opposed to irresponsible formalists. Furthermore, they misrepresent Tudor's achievement. He was a formalist, too. His subtlety, his economy—the sheer, pressing inwardness of his choreography—were precious gifts to ballet. Does anyone out there have two million dollars to spare? A.B.T.'s number is in the book. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

LOCAL COLOR

William Eggleston at the Whitney.

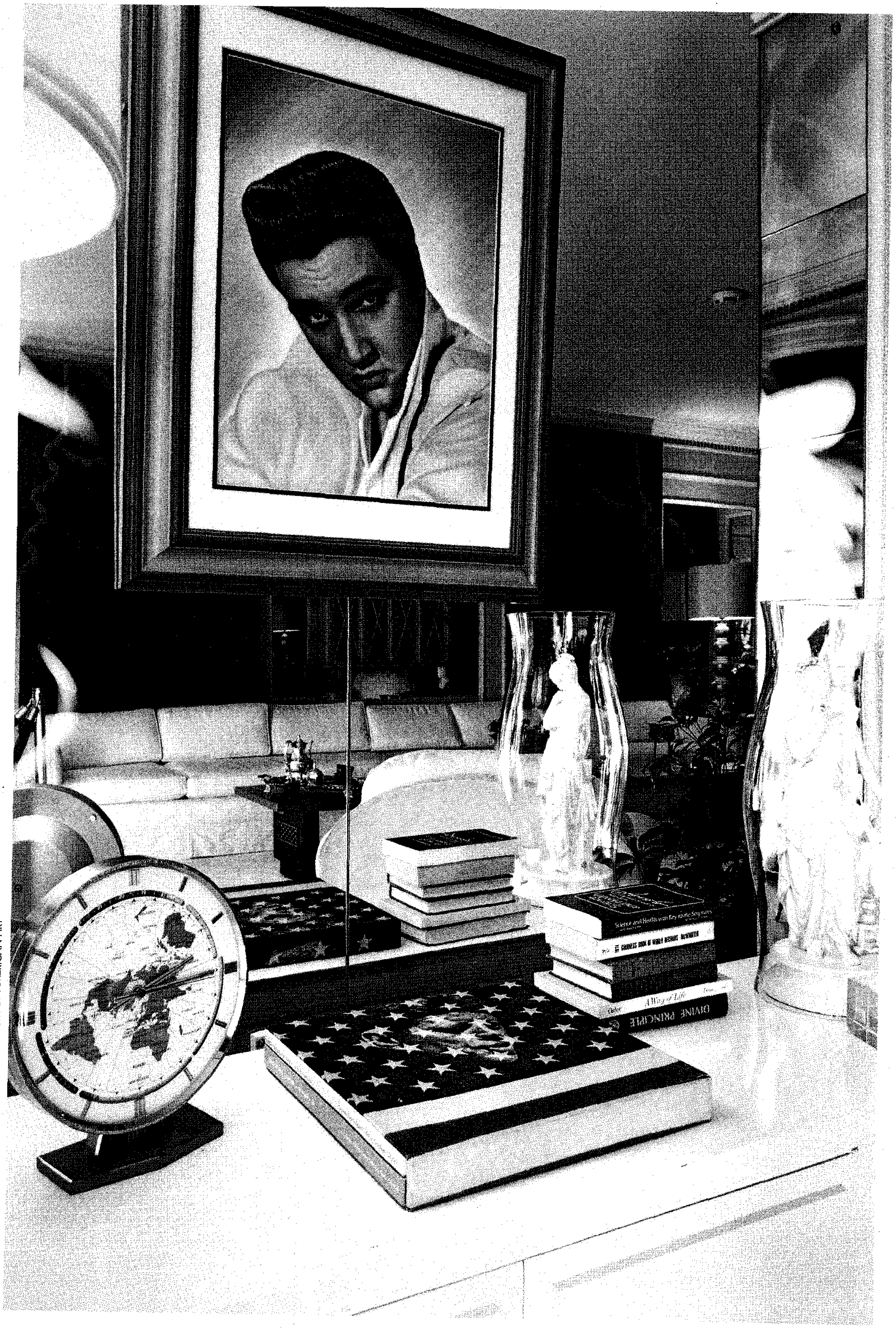
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

You can always tell a William Eggleston photograph. It's the one in color that hits you in the face and leaves you confused and happy, and perhaps convinces you that you don't understand photography nearly as well as you thought you did. To view "William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008," at the Whitney, is to be pummelled by eccentric beauty, and to wonder about it. A pertinaciously slumming aristocrat from Memphis, Tennessee, and points south, Eggleston, now sixty-nine years old, is one of the great Romantic originals of camerawork, with Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, Stephen Shore, and Nan Goldin. Like them, he goes beyond helping us to notice certain wrinkles of reality. His eye for epiphanies in the everyday raises suspicions that, without his aid, we miss more than we see of what falls within our gaze. The effect involves techniques that seem hardly fair in straight photography—chiefly dye-transfer printing, an arduous and expensive process (mooted, of late, by digital technology) which employs screens of magenta, cyan blue, and yellow to manipulate color. But there's no gainsaying Eggleston's results. He shoots like a shutterbug and executes like a painter. Synthetic gorgeousness iconizes pictures that flaunt the nonchalance of snapshots. His art attained full power in one of his first dye-transfers, printed in the early nineteen-seventies from a transparency made in the sixties: a supermarket lad awkwardly collecting shopping carts in late-afternoon sun that sets his reddish ducktail-combed hair and adolescent flesh uncannily aglow. The subject is a dreary fact. The content is erotic truth that Plato would have endorsed.

Eggleston was born rich, in Memphis, in 1939, the maternal grandson of a prominent judge and a plantation heiress from Sumner, Mississippi. They raised him, in Sumner, almost from birth until the age of eleven, while his father served in the Navy and his mother lived mainly at a naval base in Florida. Afflicted with asthma, Eggleston grew up largely indoors, playing piano, drawing, and tinkering with sound equipment. Given a Brownie camera at the age of ten, he took pictures of his dog. The results disappointed him, and he had no further truck with the medium until 1957, when, briefly a student at Vanderbilt University, he bought a camera and a developer at the urging of a painter friend. Two years later, at the University of Mississippi (he never graduated from any college; he refused to take tests), he was profoundly affected by two classic books of modern photography: Henri Cartier-Bresson's "The Decisive Moment" (1952) and Walker Evans's "American Photographs" (1938).

Eggleston and Rosa Kate Dosset, a daughter of plantation owners and a friend since childhood, had been conspicuous in Sumner for their matching baby-blue Cadillacs. They married in 1964, and had three children. Eggleston is a gregarious, much-travelled, hard-living dandy, proud never to have owned a pair of jeans. An installation in the show, "Stranded in Canton" (circa 1973-74), screens excerpts from thirty hours of black-and-white videotape, some of which he shot using an infrared camera in dim light. The subject amounts to a louche, peripatetic Southern spawn of Andy Warhol's dissipated Factory scene of the mid-sixties. Acquaintances of the photographer, drunk and/or drugged more often than not, hilariously rant, casually empty a pistol into a ceiling, bite the heads off live chickens (see it, believe it), and otherwise parade lives of unquiet desperation. Occasionally, the Delta blues singer Walter (Furry) Lewis brings the proceedings to order with an impromptu, haunting performance. I find it rewarding to think of Eggleston as a blues

Eggleston's "Untitled" (1983), from a series of photographs taken at Graceland.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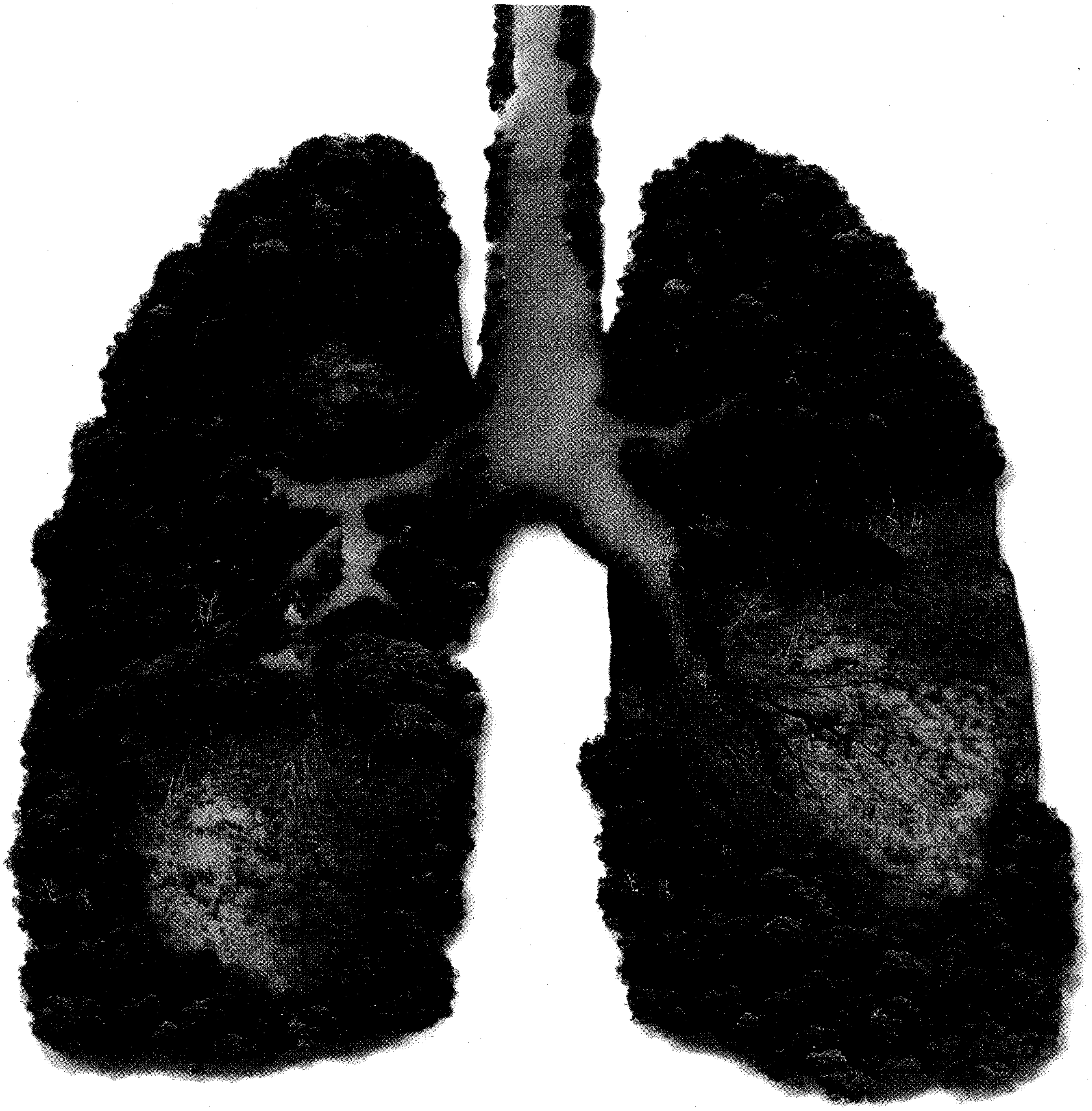
photographer. The extraordinary aesthetic discipline of his photographs shimmers with subliminal knowledge of the hell-bent—although, in a Southern vein, sardonically mannered—chaos that erupts in "Canton." At the video's end, a memorial sequence ticks off the untimely demise of many of the participants.

Eggleston belongs to a generation of Americans who elevated photography to the rank of a major art. In 1967, he met and impressed John Szarkowski, the photography curator of the Museum of Modern Art, who promulgated a theory of the medium as "a picture-making system." Through Szarkowski, Eggleston met Arbus and the leading vernacular stylists Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander. In 1970, his friend and sometime mentor William Christenberry, a color photographer of the rural South, introduced him to the wide-ranging curator Walter Hopps, with whom he took to crisscrossing the country by car, snapping pictures by the thousand. Szarkowski sprang Eggleston on the world in a stunning and controversial show at MOMA, in 1976. Conservative critics despised the snapshot-like informality and the plangent hues of, for example, a ground-level shot of a tricycle on a suburban street, its green metal parts, rusty handlebars, red handgrips, and black tires under a bone-white sky, as abrupt as lightning. The show trampled the traditional association of art photography with black-and-white film.

Eggleston's uses of color insult intellectual values that long defined modern photography, including the work of his early heroes Cartier-Bresson and Evans. Carefully modulated black-and-white tonality conduces to mental as well as optical clarity; color befuddles. Eggleston's receptiveness to chromatic profusion extends to a sense of space that spills beyond the limits of the framing edge. One of his best-known pictures shows a besuited white man outdoors with a deferential black servant. The tacit social commentary founders in surrounding details which surely any other photographer would have cropped out. At the show, I was mildly shocked to realize that my own memory had edited the image in exactly that way, framing a meaning that Eggleston's actual composition, while not denying it, fastidiously de-emphasizes. He's an aesthete, not a propagandist. His great subject is the too-muchness of the real. He does regularly suppress one significant element of lived experience: time. His art re-proves Roland Barthes's influential theory of the *punctum*—a Proustian quantum of lost time—as intrinsic to photography's emotional power. The hour on Eggleston's clock is always right now. Whatever is dated in his early subjects—car models, hairdos—barges into the present with a redolence of William Faulkner's famous remark that the past isn't only not dead, it isn't even past.

The Whitney show has been vividly installed by the curators Elisabeth Sussman and Thomas Weski with juxtapositions that interrelate like stanzas of a poem. Images of an opened, dark-blue oven and a grimy, green-tiled shower stall flank another, taken from the front seat of a car, of an emaciated, tattooed young guy, staring warily, with a bland residential street visible out the window behind him. The three pictures strike me as variations on a theme of gaping emptiness.

Eggleston has thrived on commissioned projects. Shots of Graceland, Elvis Presley's Memphis home, sponsored by fellow-Memphians, suggest that the singer's grandly garish taste in interior decoration was calculated with the photographer's predilections in mind. Sent by *Rolling Stone* to portray Jimmy Carter in Plains, Georgia, shortly before the 1976 election, Eggleston failed to find the candidate at home but compensated with a pictorial essay on the strangely glamorous drabness of the town and its ambient countryside. Lots of photographers have prowled picturesque back roads. What makes Eggleston special? An anecdote reported by Weski in the Whitney catalogue drops a clue. In 1964, Eggleston lamented to a friend, "I don't particularly *like* what's around me." The friend, a New York artist named Tom Young, suggested that he should be taking photographs precisely for that reason. The hint inspired Eggleston to head directly to places he liked least, such as shopping centers. I think the emotional key to his genius is a stoical loathing, unblinking in the face of one scandalously uncongenial otherness after another. His subjects have no ascertainable dignity, except that of stubbornly existing. Nor does the hurting hipster behind the camera. All glory, such as it is, accrues to the art of photography, which doesn't care what it beholds even as it burns it, through the eye, into the soul. ♦



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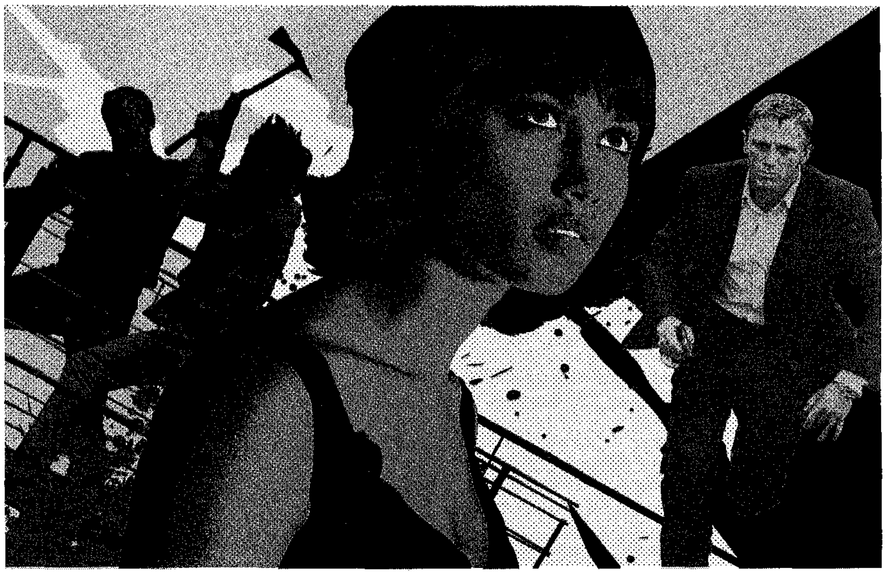
SOUL SURVIVOR

"Quantum of Solace."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Who wants to be James Bond? Everyone of the male sex, pretty much, in the old days. Schoolboys dreamed of growing up to be 007, and middle-aged men lay awake, in the small hours, and wondered why they had grown into something else—how it was that their wristwatches merely told the time rather than spewing out metal ticker tape or magnetically unzipping the back of a woman's dress. To sit and watch Bond's recent adventures, however, is to witness that reverie in decline. In "Casino Royale" (2006), he had his private parts given a thorough dusting with a hank of rope. Now, in "Quantum of Solace," we are taken on a journey into the even more private crannies of his soul—an item of specialist equipment with which he has only recently been fitted, and which may come as a shock to longtime fans of the franchise. Sean Connery smoldered like Troy, but that told us nothing about the fires within. As for Roger Moore, he didn't need a soul. He had a safari suit. These days, though, the outer Bond gets such a rough ride that you have to ask whether anyone, man or boy, still yearns to get in touch with his inner 007. In short, who wants to be Daniel Craig?

Well, I could use his Aston Martin. There was a nasty moment, in the previous film, when Craig, in his début as Bond, drove a rented Ford Mondeo, in ladylike blue, and he rounds off this new installment at the wheel of a Ford hybrid sedan, like a dad on a fishing trip, but we begin, as we damn well should, at the wheel of an Aston Martin DBS. This our hero pilots around a series of stomach-dropping bends, with Alfa Romeos in pursuit and one car diving smartly off the side of a mountain: all in all, a charming snapshot of ordinary Italian traffic. Two details set the tone. First, Bond's Aston has a door wrenched off in the mayhem, and, once at a standstill, he clambers out of the gap; filmed from the outside, this would look comic, but the director, Marc Forster, shoots it from inside the car, thus making clear that his own contribution to the genre will have the humor stripped from it like chrome. Second, one of the Alfas hits an oncoming truck, while another piles into a house. Quite right, too, except that both are head-on crunches, and you feel them in the judder of your spine. The same thing happens later, in Haiti, when Bond steals one boat and smacks it amidships into another. That sort of impact is what "Quantum of Solace" is about. The title is too frail by far. Someone should have called it "Total of Wreckage." Or "Batter of Ram."



Olga Kurylenko and Daniel Craig in Marc Forster's James Bond movie.

SEAN McCABE

There is a vein of masochism running through this carnage, as if Bond would deem it dishonorable to dish out what he couldn't take. He dispatches people not for idle pleasure, as his more preening enemies have done, but as a way to beat himself up and stun his nerves out of the lethargy of grief. At the end of "Casino Royale," he lost his lover, Vesper Lynd, who is paid a forlorn tribute here as he downs six of the cocktails named after her. (In the fog of alcohol, those frightening eyes of his mist over, but they still refuse to thaw.) The new movie gives us Bond in mourning—a condition that issues, according to Freud, in melancholy and a general indifference to life, but which causes this particular sufferer to stab people in the neck and toss them from tall buildings. He is no less indifferent to the lives of others, in other words, than he is to his own, and the casual, shrugging quality of his brutishness makes it especially wounding: watch him flip a guy off a motorbike, kick the splayed limbs of guards back into the elevator where he just laid them out cold, and, worst of all, heave the body of a trusted acquaintance into a Dumpster, as if all life ended in the trash. As M (Judi Dench) remarks, in one of her tarter moments, "If you could avoid killing every possible lead, it would be deeply appreciated."

The leads matter, because they promise a solution to Vesper's death. She was involved with a secret organization, and only by following a money trail does Bond sniff out its master: Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric), whose name suggests a trainee hair stylist—where are the Scaramangas and Oddjobs of yesteryear?—but whose favorite sport consists of toppling the governments of minor nations and pinching their natural resources. The plot follows the familiar, curious pattern that tends to affect every exploit of 007, with the romance of the peripatetic slowly shrinking to a squabble that feels both crazed and touchingly provincial. This time, having hopped lightly around the globe, paying his brief respects to Siena, London, Haiti, and Austria, our hero winds up fussing about with water supplies at the back end of Bolivia. Is Vesper truly avenged because her beloved James gets to butch it out with the flower-shirted Dominic in what looks like a Ramada Inn? The place is so isolated, and frankly so hideous, that there appear to be no other guests, or even room service. Collateral damage is minimal, the world is saved, and nobody even noticed.

The narrative of Forster's film is certainly sketchy enough, and early viewers reported a dismaying sense of desiccation: no quips, no gadgets, no time to relax. For the aerial dogfight, both planes have propellers, as if Bond were just a throwback to Indiana Jones. He should wear Savile Row suits, but the costume designer puts him in a black blouson and flat-fronted cream chinos, like a slightly precious soccer fan. As for sex, you might as well stay home with a pair of bed socks and a DVD of "Alvin and the Chipmunks." Bond finds a beauteous comrade-in-arms, Camille (Olga Kurylenko), but she, it turns out, has her own agenda of revenge, and their sole point of contact is the kind of kiss that tennis partners exchange when they win a mixed doubles. I was cheered by the arrival of Agent Fields (Gemma Arterton), an upstanding British redhead, but, after showing Bond her raincoat and her naked back, in that order, she makes an alarming exit. Why, then, days after seeing "Quantum of Solace," do I find, against expectation, that I can't shake it off? Given that it seems such a diminution of the Bond legend, boiling him down to the bare bones of aggression, what can it bring to the party?

The James Bond backlist is, like the history of cinema itself, a trade-off between the real and the fantastic. The best thing in Forster's film is a fabulous sequence in which 007 takes out a few baddies during a lakeside performance of "Tosca"; the intercutting between his own violence and the melodrama onstage, meaner and less swooning than Coppola's similar set piece in "The Godfather: Part III," tells you everything about the melding of artifice and pain that has sustained the saga of Bond. I have lost count of the number of times in which we have been offered a darker or dirtier Bond; as M, worried about his sanity, relieves him of duty in the new film, I recalled the unsavory "Licence to Kill" (1989), whose working title had been "Licence Revoked." The Bond films have nodded to geopolitics but genuflected toward exotica, and the hero is, in himself, a wild concoction—the free-range spy, roaming abroad in the service of a nonexistent empire back home. There may be intakes of breath, in audiences here, when Bond says that American intelligence services "will lie down with anybody," and when even the temperate M blurts out, "I don't give a shit about the C.I.A.," but how can we seriously ascribe topicality to a thriller that pays no heed to actual foes, such as Al Qaeda, presumably for fear of denting the market overseas?

The truth is that one thing alone lends gravity to Bond, and tethers him down to our shared earth, and that is the actor who plays him. This is where Craig and Connery score, and where the others lag behind. "Quantum of Solace" is too savage for family entertainment, but, as a study in headlong desperation, it's easier to believe in than many more ponderous films. "Everything he touches seems to wither and die," Dominic Greene tells Camille, and Bond might well agree. "I don't have any friends," he says, more as a statement of fact than as a complaint, and Forster deliberately surrounds Craig with unmenacing beta males: pale and flabby types from MI6, plus a bad Boris Karloff impersonator as Greene's henchman. Even the cocktail waiter looks weak and watery. None of them can match 007, let alone reach out to him, and I found myself relishing his rare flickers of companionship: with the ever more mothering M, for instance, and with Mathis (Giancarlo Giannini), his rumpled sidekick from "Casino Royale." "Come with me," Bond asks him, with a spectre of a smile, on his way to South America: a request echoed, when they get there, by Mathis's own distress call—"Stay with me." In the end, though, Bond's closest encounter is with a traitor, whom he tracks across the roofs of Siena. They crash through a roof, into a building undergoing restoration, and tangle together on ropes—swaying in the void and grabbing for their guns. It is an airy, murderous parody of the scene in "The English Patient" in which Juliette Binoche, in the same part of the country, is hoisted high in a church to inspect the frescoes. Art gives life, and more than a quantum of solace; but James Bond, aloft and alone, is always the bringer of death. ♦

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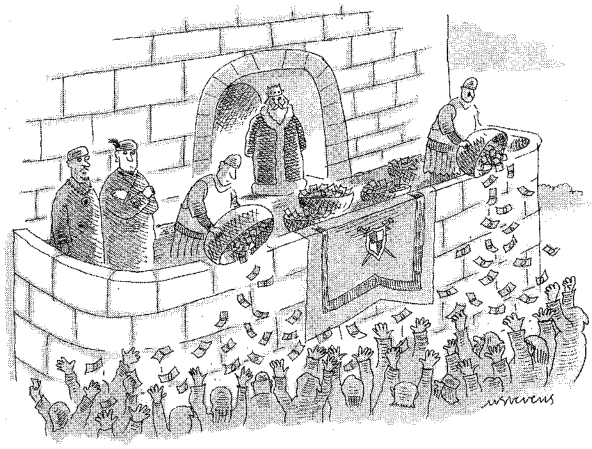
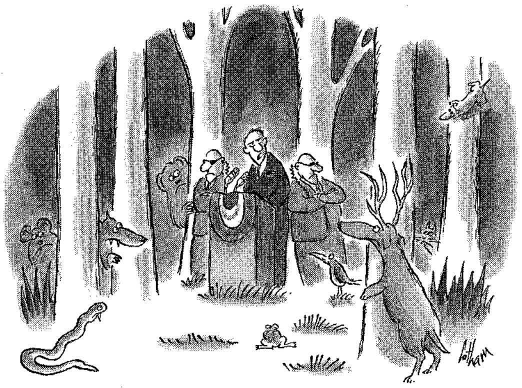
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, November 16th. Finalists in the November 3rd contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 1st issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Looks like another ye olde stimulus package."
John Burke, Park Ridge, Ill.



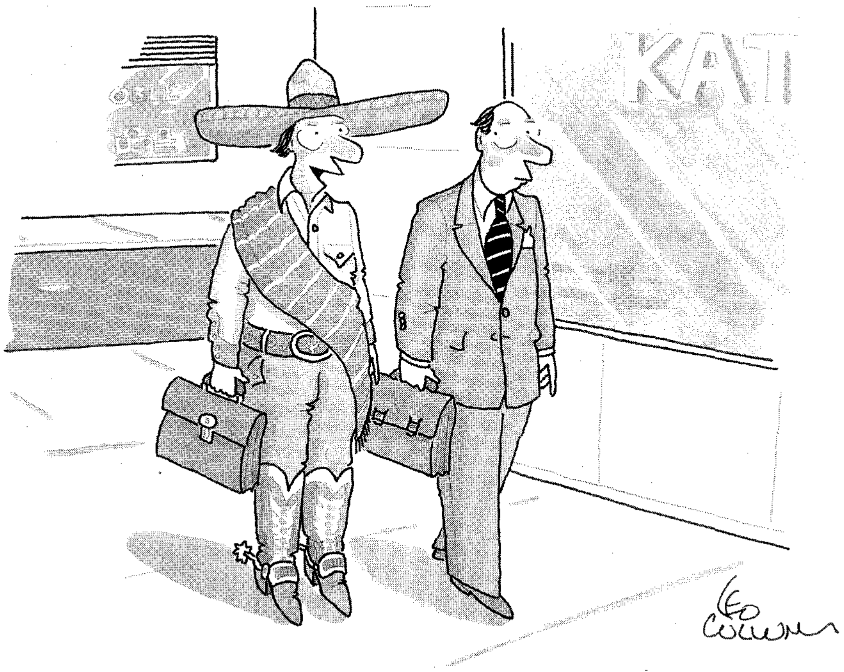
THE FINALISTS

"As a weasel, I need your vote."
Mike Millner, Chapel Hill, N.C.

"Read my lips—no new taxidermy."
Eric Kneedler, Bethesda, Md.

"O.K., who pooped on the lectern?"
Michael Morris, New Haven, Conn.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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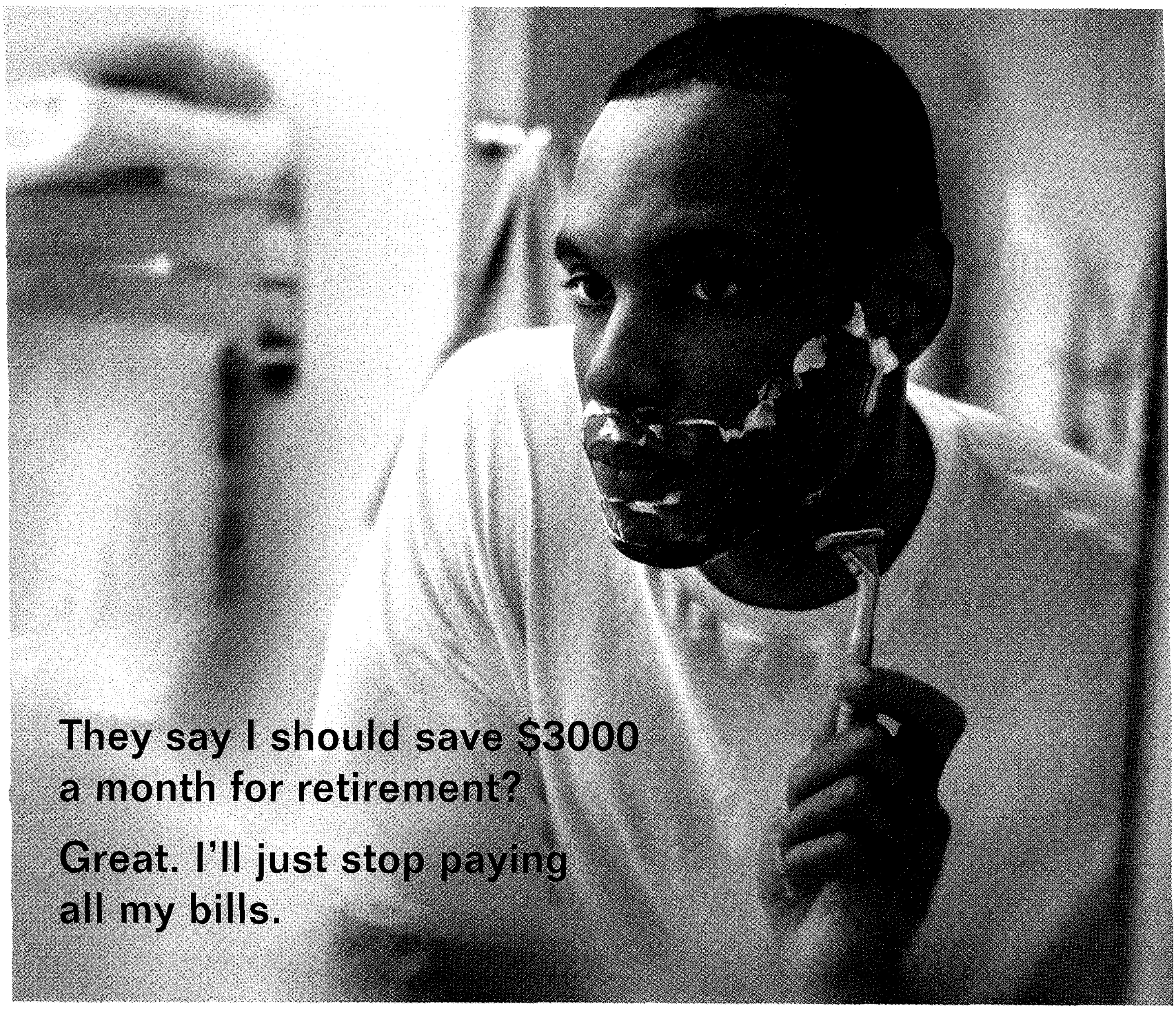
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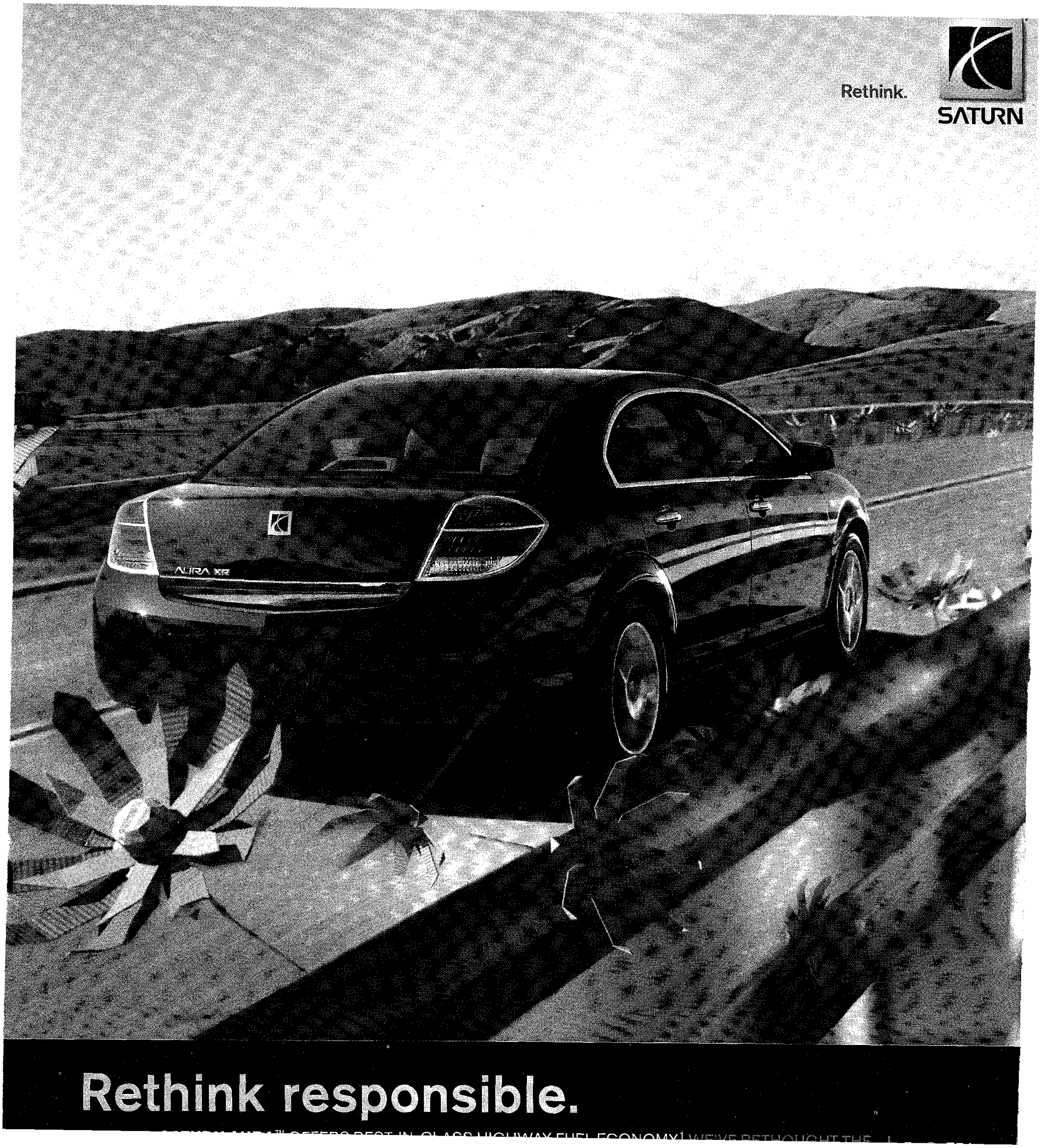
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